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THE COOLIE

His Rights and Wrongs

NOTES OF A JOURNEY TO BRITISH GUIANA, WITH A REVIEW OF THE SYSTEM AND OF THE RECENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

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BY THE

AUTHOR OF "GINX'S BABY"

STRAHAN & CO., PUBLISHERS
56 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON
1871

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO

MY FRIEND

SHELDON AMOS.

PREFACE.

THE origin of the following pages is sufficiently explained in the Introduction. The subject treated in them is one, without exaggeration, of measureless and daily intensifying gravity. Whether an artificial system for the transfer from the swarming hives of Eastern Asia to the needy plains of the tropical West can be framed, organised, and conducted with results equally efficacious to the capitalist and beneficent to the immigrants, is the question which, from one of its most conspicuous examples, is here discussed. How far may an anomalous system be safely used to remedy anomalous conditions of human labour-power and assist in wealth-development? It will be seen that the author has somewhat carefully adhered to the particular example of the Coolie system which came under his own observation, and it is as a review of the example thus seen that he offers this contribution to the subject. The statesman and the philanthropist are equally

interested in a movement destined no doubt to expand with the growing energies of the world; holding out promise of relief to vast aggregations of society, and charged with hopes for the world's improvement. Like every other human system, this has its faults and failures. Wrong and sorrow are unhappily inalienable from human effort. All that the wisest men can do is to help to reduce the possibilities of these things to the *minimum*, or to excise altogether systems hopelessly vicious. Such a system was the Slave-Trade. Some think that Coolie immigration is quite as intolerable. The author thinks not; and it will be for the reader of these pages to decide upon his opinion. He has tried to do justice on all hands. In Demerara he received from many planters the utmost kindness and consideration. He would pay them an ill compliment, as he would degrade himself, were he to suffer those kindnesses to close his lips to any evils which he believed to exist in the government, in class relations, or in the individual management of estates. He has therefore spoken always with frankness—never with ill-will.

Those who read the whole book will discover that the Coolie immigration system is a complicated and even difficult subject, though if they will study it carefully their interest will be found to reward their pains, and, perhaps, to arouse some of the noble sentiments that spring with blessings to the searcher

in every fresh field of humane sympathy. The work is divided into two parts; the first consisting of a simple narrative, with episodes relevant and irrelevant, of the author's journey and observations—sufficient, however, to give to the general reader an idea of the Coolie's situation and of the issues of the Coolie question. In the second part the author has discussed in detail the system in India and British Guiana, and analysed and reviewed the Report of the recent Commission as briefly as was consistent with a fair exposition of the subject. In the Appendix there will be found several extracts well worth a perusal. It should be mentioned that the sheets of a considerable portion of the book had been printed before the Blue-book of the Report presented to Parliament, and which has been revised by the two Commissioners in England, was issued. The quotations therefore in the early pages are taken from the copy printed in the colony.

TEMPLE, *July*, 1871.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

COLOUR white and colour brown, Brahmin and Pariah, domineering Anglo-Saxon and supple Asian, master and servant, lord and serf, Government and labourers, Planters and Coolies, these are the parties, the controversy about whose relations and interests, mutual or antagonistic, is the subject of this book, as it was the object of my journey to British Guiana. Often has the world seen a similar controversy, the scene shifting with the shifting fortunes of races.

Of no small gravity are the issues to the parties concerned. To the planters, who are staking fortunes upon fresh annual swarmings from the great Indian or Chinese hives—nay, to you also, all sugar-consuming bipeds—the question whether one hundred thousand hogsheads, more or less, shall be yearly extracted from the rich mud-banks that lie between the Essequibo, Demerara, and Corentyn rivers is somewhat personal and serious; is it not? It needs, therefore, only to be said that if Coolie proved impracticable in the controversy, the whole of that vast industry

would be endangered, with everything depending on it of capital and energy and commercial progress.

On the other hand, deeply interesting is this question to the Coolie himself and to the philanthropist. A hundred thousand hogsheads of sugar per annum in the world, more or less, is a tittle compared with the question—Whether the toilers who produce it are wronged and unhappy? Some fifty thousand immigrants, carried by long voyages from their own land and family and race associations, are—of their own free will let it be remembered—bound for a certain number of years to fetch and carry, to work and delve, for any master assigned to them by a Demerara Executive; bound under a wonderfully complicated system, with legal balances and checks, devised, some say, to protect them, others say to wrap them in inextricable bonds. How these people endure the change of life, how they are treated, their well-being or misery, and that of their children, have been the subjects of an elaborate inquiry ordered by her Majesty's Government. This inquiry, I venture to say, demands the fairest, keenest, strictest, most instant attention of that Great Mogul the British public.

Some time since, one, assuming to himself the office of Coolies' advocate, represented to the Colonial Secretary their state to be little other than that from which not many years ago the tillers of the same soil were redeemed by our generous fathers. Seduced from India or China by false promises (so he seems to have averred)—not duly notified of the legislation

which would affect their relations when they reached the field of labour—assigned without due caution on the part of the Executive to the power of unconscientious masters—wronged by the law and against law—daily injured, and unable to obtain redress, because of combinations between unjust magistrates, hireling doctors, and manœuvring planters—dying unrecked and unreckoned (I have tried faithfully thus to sum up this man's charges)—such a fifty thousand British subjects, anywhere existing, would heat the sympathies of English hearts to boiling-point, and woe worth the Governor and Council, Court of Policy or impolicy, Combined Court or Electors' College, judges, magistrates, doctors, planters, managers, overseers, and "drivers," who should be accomplices in such a state of things! Most certainly this mud-bank question is a heavy matter. One hundred thousand hogsheads of sugar *versus* fifty thousand human souls; your money or their life.

It will be seen that I was selected by two great philanthropic societies to represent the Coolies in this inquiry. I accepted and held their retainer as a counsel, not as a partisan. I not only am not but never was a member of either of the associations. No one can accuse me of prejudice either way when I went to Demerara. On the contrary, I determined to form an unbiassed judgment, and I claim for my opinions the weight due to impartiality.

Besides my own experiences and the evidence adduced at the inquiry, I now have the Report of the Commissioners to fall back upon as at once a source

of information and confirmation. It is not possible to exaggerate the value of this Report as a masterly and, long as it is, a concise review of the whole Coolie system. It must have no small influence upon the future policy of the Colonial Office, upon the machinery adopted in India and in various Coolie-worked colonies of the empire, upon the fortunes of peoples whose future is one of the gravest problems of humanity. I cannot wonder that there are philanthropists in England who watch, with a jealousy made alert by former evils, the transportation over immense distances of ignorant and simple people to places where they are subjected to the uncontrolled power of a local plutocracy—a planting community whose interest it naturally is to obtain for the cost of their importation the maximum of profit. It is a noble zeal which prompts the distant stranger to look after the man whose brotherhood is the only claim to his regard. On the other hand, it is needful not to be generous only to the Coolie, but to be just to his masters; and it is in the earnest desire to have this recognised, to strike an even balance between conflicting opinions, that I write this book. If I may find it difficult—as who would not?—clearly to separate myself from the powerful influences of a labour carried on for some busy months in one behalf, on the other hand, I may appeal confidently to those planter friends, whose kind and manly hospitality made my work endurable, to acquit me at all times of intentional injustice.

Demerara, of which Georgetown is the capital, is a

division or county of British Guiana, a colony lying between Surinam or Dutch Guiana, and Venezuela, on the north-west shoulder of South America. British Guiana is divided into three counties, named respectively after the great rivers which bound or transpierce them—Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo.

Next let me state the dimensions of the colony. From the Corentyn river, separating it from Surinam, to the Barima river, which glides between it and Venezuela, extends a coast-line of two hundred and eighty miles, from which line, in towards the Brazils, the country stretches three and sometimes four hundred miles or more in breadth. It lies between latitude 8° N. and 3° 30′ S.

Seven days before I set out for Demerara, I had as much idea of visiting the moon; but when the Aborigines Protection Society and the Anti-Slavery Society offered me, as a barrister, a retainer in an investigation concerning for right or wrong near half a hundred thousand souls, I could not hesitate about my duty or be tardy in my movements. So many Coolies and Chinese, imported by and for the purposes of British enterprise, were living and working for masters in that out-of-the-way colony. They had immigrated under a system approved by the Colonial Office. The Indian Government and that of British Guiana were also parties to it, as regarded the Coolies, and the Chinese Government as regarded its own citizens.

It should be clearly understood that, as I have above hinted, the Coolie question is of far larger dimensions than is implied by the last statement.

Other parts of the West Indies, such as Trinidad and Jamaica, have their Coolies, and are eagerly looking for more; and in Mauritius alone over two hundred thousand of these expatriated people demand British protection and care. In the United States of America and in Australasia the movement already commenced for the importation of Eastern labour foreshadows a time when this will be among the greatest of social-political subjects, when the statesman and the economist will alike need to exercise all their astuteness in solving its perpetually-increasing problems.

These immigrants, almost every one of them, landed in Demerara, actually or practically under a bond of indenture. Hereafter we shall see that the Indian's indenture is executed in Demerara—the Chinaman's in his own country. By that indenture entered into with the Guiana Executive, they had agreed generally to serve for five years any master assigned to them by that Executive.

Here, for instance, let me give a paragraph or two of the indenture of my friend and *quondam* host, Lum a Yung. "Made the 16th day of December, in the year of the Christian era, being the 3rd day of the 12th month of the 9th year of the reign of Hiefung according to the Chinese Imperial Calendar." By this document, in bad English and good Chinese side by side, the said Lum a Yung bound himself to "John Gardiner Austin, *Special Agent of the British Government for the regulating and encouragement of Emigration from China to the British West Indies.*"

"1. That the said party of the first part shall and

will, so soon as he shall be required, embark on the ship *Dora* now lying at anchor in the harbour of Hong Kong, and bound for the colony of British Guiana, and remain on board the said ship henceforward until she proceeds to sea, and shall then proceed as a passenger on board the said ship to British Guiana, for the purpose of carrying out the stipulations hereinafter contained on the part of the said party of the first part.

"2. That the said party of the first part shall and will from time to time and at all times during the term of five years, to be computed, &c.,—well, faithfully, and diligently, and according to the best of his skill and ability, work and serve as an agricultural labourer, in the said colony according to the provisions hereinafter contained.

"3. That the said party of the first part shall and will work as such labourer as aforesaid for the space of seven hours and a half of each day during the aforesaid term of five years, on such estate as may be pointed out by the Governor of British Guiana, with a reservation of not less than five days to be set apart during each year as holidays at the China New Year by the said Governor, and of every Sabbath day."

In return for this the "Agent of the British Government" contracted, so long as the immigrant performed his part of the agreement, to cause to be paid to him weekly "the same rate of wages for the same proportionate quantity of work as may from time to time be paid to unindentured labourers working on the same plantation," and to cause to be provided for

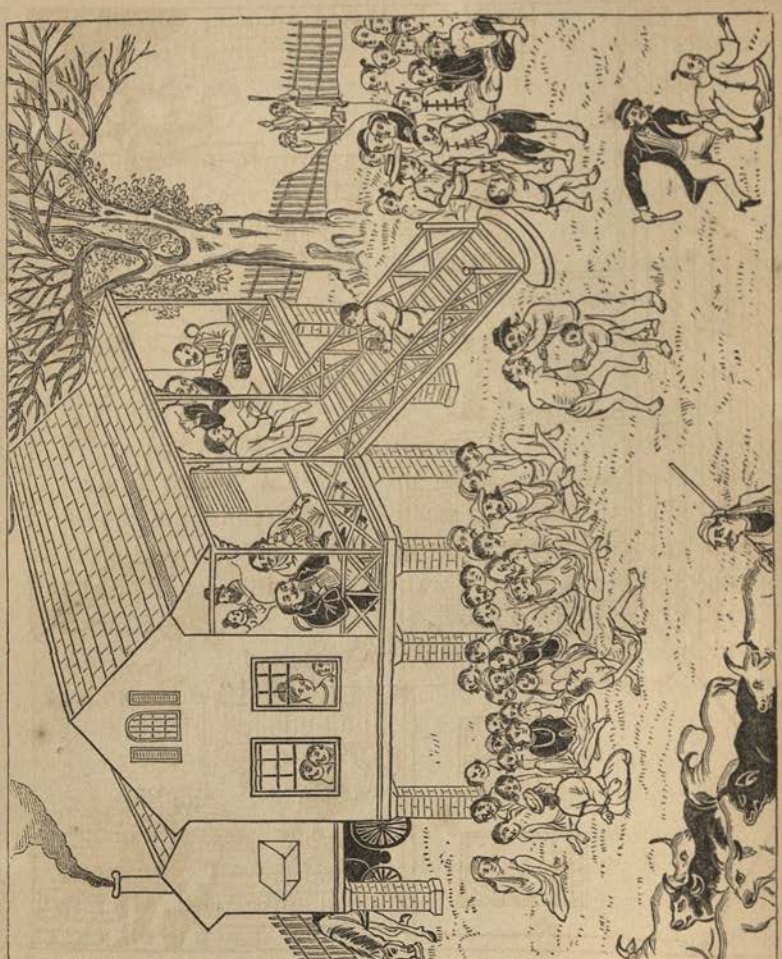
him house, garden-ground, and medical attendance free of expense.

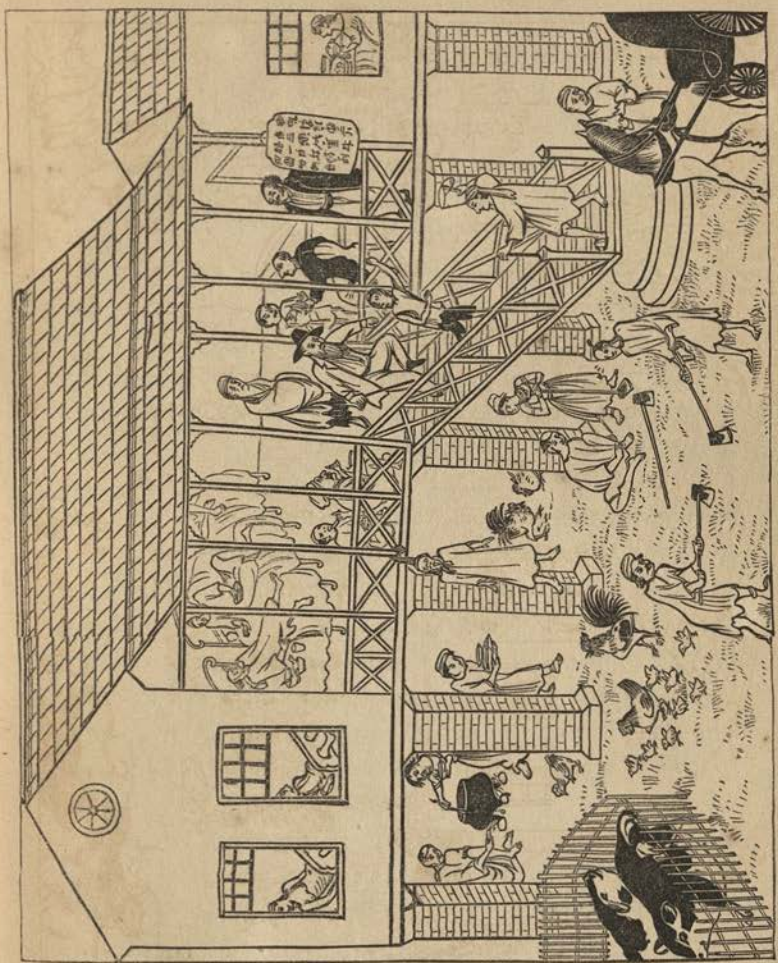
Here, then, in a few authentic words have we sketched out for us a first outline of the whole scheme of Coolie Immigration—the immigrant's contract and that of his employer—a transport system under direct supervision, through an agent, of the British Government. This contract is, however, to be performed in British Guiana, is affected in many ways by its laws, and is to be enforced in its courts. The laws, therefore, and the character of the persons who administer them, are of first importance to the Coolie. Seven hours and a half a day, six days a week, for two hundred and sixty consecutive weeks, is Lum a Yung's or Ramsahi's contract with an unknown master. Is he idle? Is he sick? Is he ageing and weak? Is he malingering? Or: Is he cheated? Is he maltreated? Is he efficiently doctored—fed with good food when sick—carefully tended in hospital? Some one on the spot, of absolute shrewd independence, is constantly needed to answer these questions, when occasion requires, authoritatively, yea or nay, in the interest of master or servant. Every one will see in a moment what a vast number of issues may arise out of this singular apprenticeship.

I cannot more readily and succinctly bring before my readers the nature of the issues involved in the late inquiry than by referring them to two woodcuts, copied from caricatures executed and brought to me in Georgetown by a clever Chinese immigrant, who had been a schoolmaster in his own country. The

originals—obviously Chinese in style and execution, and I am assured original in their invention —are coloured, and several times larger than the spirited reproduction by the engraver. Not only have they the quaint artistic ingenuity of the Chinese, but they will give an idea of the shrewdness and cunning ability which are common to all these Asiatic immigrants in stating and systematizing their grievances.

The picture on p. 10 is a tolerably fair representation of a manager's house on its brick pillars. To the left, at the bottom of the picture, is a free Coolie driving his cattle. To the right a rural constable is seizing an unhappy pigtail to convey him to the lock-up, being absent, as we see, from the band just above him, with his arms unbound. This indicates that he is trying to avoid the restraints of his indenture, and for this he is liable to punishment. Above him, on the right of the picture, is a group of Chinese, and on the left of the steps a group of Indians, represented with their arms bound, an emblem of indentureship. They always speak of themselves as "bound" when under indenture. At the foot of the steps, on either side, is a Chinaman and a Coolie, from whose breasts two drivers are drawing blood with a knife, the life fluid being caught by boys in the swizzle-glasses of the colony. A boy is carrying the glasses up the steps to the attorney and the manager, who sit on the left of the verandah, and who are obviously fattening at the expense of the bound people below them. A fat wife and children look out of the windows. Behind, through a break in the wall, are represented the





happy and healthy owners in England; to the right, under the tree, through a gap in the fence, are aged Chinese, weeping over their unfortunate relatives. In the right-hand corner of the verandah is the pay-table, with the overseers discussing and arranging stoppages of wages. The smoking chimney of the kitchen and the horse eating his provender seem to be intended to contrast with the scene in front. This, then, gives a picturesquely sentimental and satirical aspect of the grievances likely to arise under the Coolie system.

The picture on p. 11 represents a more specific issue—that upon the point of treatment in hospital. Here we have a hospital, a large, airy building. On the left, through the windows, two men are shown in the stocks. Whether these were used or not upon any estates was an important question in the inquiry. Next, to the right, are bedsteads, on which lie the patients. The nearest, a Chinaman, is just expiring, spite of the chicken soup—*vide* the chicken in the basin—which has been supplied to him *in extremis*. The question of the actual supply of nourishing food in the hospitals when ordered by the doctors was another point raised by the Commission. Again, in the middle we see two stout immigrants whom the doctor, sitting in the chair, is tenderly treating, while the manager kicks down the steps a meagre wretch, too weak to be worth curing. Another issue—are all the immigrants equally and properly treated in hospital? Look at the stout black nurse standing beside the "diet-list," whereon is officially inscribed,

in Chinese, Indian, and English, the scale of diet, by which any patient who can read may ascertain whether the doctor's instructions are carried out as regards him or his fellows. Beyond, in the room to the right, is the black man's favourite, feeding on the dainties and porter ordered for the patients. A clear question raised here—Whether the subordinates do not cheat both their masters and the Coolies? Below we see the doctor's horse, well fed; to the left, the manager's pigs, well fed; and about and under the house, crowing and fighting cocks, well fed; while thin wretches hoe the ground, and a desperate Chinaman hangs himself from the verandah. All this is powerfully satirical. And, lastly, we have the black cook issuing the rations, and stirring the chicken broth—the chicken all the while running about safely outside the pot!

These illustrations, then, are curious as embodying in caricature much of the case advanced in the inquiry on behalf of the Coolies, the proof or disproof of which is so vitally serious to the planters. It is, perhaps, in favour of the latter, before any evidence is produced either way, that an immigrant could treat the question with such humour—grim though it be.

A letter, dated Christmas-day, 1869, was addressed to Earl Granville, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, by Mr. George W. Des Vœux, the Administrator at St. Lucia, who had for five years been a stipendiary magistrate in British Guiana. This letter will be found in the Appendix.* Lord

* See Appendix A.

Granville, after communicating it to the India Office, in March following ordered an inquiry. Sir George Young, Bart., a junior barrister, but a man of distinction for his varied abilities, was appointed a Commissioner, and had gone out to join Mr. Charles Mitchell, of Trinidad, nominated by a direction of the Colonial Office sent to Mr. Gordon, Governor of that island.* I expected to find the Commission at work on my arrival in Georgetown.

* In the paper in *Good Words* (January, 1871) I used language which may have conveyed the impression that Governor Gordon had some part in his nomination. I do not know that it is of much consequence, but I am authoritatively informed that Mr. Mitchell's appointment was solely that of the Colonial Office, and that Governor Gordon had nothing to do with it.

CHAPTER II.

THE TERMINI—AND BETWEEN.

"YOU must be at Southampton, sir, to leave by the tender, at half-past eleven to-morrow," said the clerk in Moorgate Street. Early, therefore, was the rising, and thrilling the family excitement, in order that I might catch the eight-o'clock train. I was going alone beyond seas for indefinite months, into strange regions, with black reputations in health matters, and on business of deep importance. Enough to make the time anxious. And here I am at my door, the cab loaded, the servants—as, God bless 'em! they are wont to do when one goes away from home—tearfully watching to bid me godspeed, when nurse comes down with two bright, curly-haired babes, and I take them in my arms, and over the pink cheeks and dimpling, smiling faces my eyes grow hazy as I give a long embrace.

* * * * * *

How well I remember the day!—the dull, grey London morning, through which my cab so slowly wended; the only gadabouts—sweep, newsboy, greengrocer's cart, and men and women hurrying to their

work; and here, in Rochester Row, a morning crowd, ah! how unfresh looking! clustered round some object on the pavement, with two policemen preparing a stretcher to carry it. WHAT? and WHITHER?

This was a Friday morning in June. On the previous Friday, sitting in my chambers, thinking least of such an enterprise, there entered two friends. One said—

"Will you go to Demerara?"

"What's the matter? A commission?"

"A commission—but not merely legal: one ordered by Lord Granville to inquire into the Coolie system of British Guiana. A Mr. Des Vœux, who was formerly a stipendiary magistrate there, and is now Administrator at St. Lucia, has written home a despatch, bringing some grave charges against the planters. Two societies, the Aborigines Protection and Anti-Slavery, wish to have the Coolies properly represented by counsel on the Inquiry. Will you go? You must be ready by Thursday."

Hence, reader, on the succeeding Friday morning I was, as I have described, starting for Southampton, with a home guard of honour to see me safely out of the country. Southampton is a sorry place to leave or to arrive at. Go not down by the latest train, else this is the treatment to which, as a passenger by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's vessels, you will be subjected. Your baggage, after suffering much at the hands of the railway porters, is seized upon by a selection of rough persons, possessing go-carts of doubtful capacity. If you imagine that a

small solatium to the one who happens to appropriate your parcels will insure their delivery on board the steamer, you are egregiously hopeful. He trots you along a dirty street, and suddenly turns in at a gateway. There he and you are brought up by ten or fifteen other go-carts, with as many groups of passengers. Presently, an individual emerges hastily from a wooden hut, and after examining one vehicle, rushes in again, followed by a number of passengers and porters.

"Porter, what's the matter?"—"Dock dues, sir."—"How much?"—"That depends, sir, on the size and number of the parcels. There's the man who settles it." In about fifteen minutes the man who settles it reaches my indifferent paraphernalia. "Five shillings, sir!"—"Five shillings! What for?" "Dock dues, sir." He looks hard at your pockets to see if you have any chargeable parcel concealed about you.

Having been bled at the entrance of these docks, you proceed, at the peril of your limbs and baggage, and to the discomfort of your corns, to thread your way through goods and railway trucks, for a quarter of a mile or so, until at last you reach a shed. More officials. "Have your baggage measured here, sir." "Take a ticket, sir. My boat's at your service."—"I don't want it; I'm going in the tender."—"They won't let you take your things in the tender, sir; only the little ones." Sure enough I was forced to engage this fellow for three-and-six to take my baggage on board, and pay the porter four shillings besides.

I don't know whether the Royal Mail Steamship Company will care for my opinion in these matters, but I think the few shillings per passenger which it would cost to satisfy the greed of the Dock Company would be well spent in securing the arrival on board their steamers of passengers in a contented frame of mind. 'Tis bad enough at all times to be leaving your own blessed country, without the additional harassment of being fleeced of your money and your temper at the last moment. The Company must permit me to have this growl at them. Saving the propensity of their sailors to rack and ruin your luggage, you are given no other pretence for complaint till you reach your destination.

However, here we are on board the tender. Signs of the West Indies already surround us, in groups of pale Créole children, attended by black nurses, one or two decidedly brown babies, and several pompous-looking, half-breed gentlemen, trying to look as white as possible. And here are three Scotch deer-hounds in leash, a couple of bull-terriers, and a Skye, ciceroned by a sturdy, short-necked, bull-headed man, his quaint face decorated with a moustache. More of this gentleman anon; but he was of course soon dubbed the "dog-stealer" by a military wag. We are to have a large representation of the army on board—British and otherwise: the general commanding the forces in the West Indies and family, going to assume his command at Barbadoes; the military secretary and aide-de-camp; a couple of naval captains—two young officers going to Yokohama, *viâ*

Panama and San Francisco; here also is a Demerara merchant and planter with his natural and charming impedimenta. Lucky Englishman he who fell in with such good company! The Peruvian army is represented by a colonel of engineers—the Venezuelan, by a general and his aide-de-camp. Nothing could be more amusing or significant than the contrast between the South American and the English general. One a quiet, gravè, noble-looking gentleman, with valour and honour written in every lineament; the other a tall, dapper-looking stripling, not unhandsome, dressed as a man would dress for the Paris boulevards, and certainly more like a dancing-master than a martinet. Of him, by the way, a good story eked out on the voyage. He was presented to the Emperor Napoleon, who asked him "how the war between Paraguay and Venezuela was going on?"—a geographical blunder which even Venezuelan politeness could not refrain from correcting. This general had been summoned home to his distracted country by one of its chronic revolutions, and it was a current joke on board that, until he reached home, he could not tell the name of his nation or its form of government. But I am forestalling the voyage. The *Seine* proved to be a noble vessel—paddle-wheel and steady. This was said to be her last voyage to the West Indies—though she has made several "last voyages" since—economic considerations and the demand for speed compelling the substitution for this sedate ship of one of those drunken, restless, quivering, squirming screws, in-

vented for swiftness and the distraction of weak stomachs. The rage for rapid transit, which is divesting travel of everything but bore and anguish, was about to consign this fine boat—so quiet, so dignified in her motions, so tender of the tenderest feelings—to the conveyance of stores or emigrants—happy emigrants! What she was to me—who on the ocean live the life of a dog—my pen can never express. I have sailed in many ships, but never in one so reasonable in the infliction of the necessary torments of the deep—torments not to be allayed, not to be calmed, not to be conquered by endurance, or diminished by faith, or reduced by brandy-and-water: sorrows ever new, remorseless, never from you while you toss upon the egregious waters.

I have heard people talk of the Atlantic being like a mill-pond. Save me from such a mill-pond! Smooth passages! They called this one a smooth passage; but it was the cruellest hyperbole of compliment to Neptune. Nausea getting up, nausea lying down, nausea on deck, nausea in the cabin, nausea for breakfast, dinner, tea—nauseas multiplied, aggravated, unceasing. Yet she was strangely clean and void of sea smells; and of her captain and first officer (soon to be a captain himself, let me hope) I can only say, if I must go to sea, send me with them. Captain Moir and Mr. Dix should be treasured by the Company—they are infallible favourites with the passengers. What think you of a first officer who is a superior navigator, a scientific man, a gentleman of literary and classical tastes, who discusses with you the law

of meteors, or Lyell's geological speculations, or Darwin's theory, or quotes and analyzes Horace, or reviews with sensible and informed acumen the passing history of his day, or plays a clever game of chess? You do not often encounter such talent even among the superior officers of our marine.

We steamed out to sea. After a day or two of the sea the lucky weather brought us all on deck—the abject foreigners, the poor French lady who had sat moaning in the cuddy, the stout Dutch dame who, for forty-eight hours, rested her double chin upon her ample bosom in a state of adipose imbecility, ventured up to breathe the softening air. The pretty Hamburg girl, belle of the voyage, whose pink cheek faded for a short time, came forth revived in colour and spirits, and all turned from sour subjective contemplations to seek some objective means of amusement.

A copy of "Lothair" went the rounds, spite of Blackwood's criticism. The young men took to playing "Bull"—a game which consists of attempts to pitch leaden quoits into squares, in defiance of sea-motion—or whiled away the afternoons with whist. At night the piano and violin entertained us with lively airs, to which there was an occasional dance. Did you ever try to dance upon a deck which was continually coming up and slapping your feet? Or we gossiped with each other about every one else and every one else's business. It was useless for any one to try to be mysterious. His name, occupation, destination, characteristics, were ferreted out,

and discussed with amusing candour of remark. Stories were largely contributed — many of them "yarns" on the face of them—some of the best by President P——. No better travelling companion or more thorough and genial fellow to be found in a round-the-world journey: a man of many travels and experiences. This very voyage he is going back to his government under circumstances that are singularly rare. Conducting it, some time back, in a thorough, honest, John Bull way, he excited the hatred of some of his dusky subjects. Accordingly they slipped some arsenic into a bottle of medicine that stood on his dressing-table. Only a powerful constitution saved his life after three doses of this infernal mixture. He had returned home with his family to recover, and was now sent back again by the Colonial Minister for the oddest reason that ever occurred even to such an official. At least, so the joke went. It had been found impossible to detect the perpetrator of the crime which had so nearly touched the president's life; but the cool gentlemen at the Colonial Office, sitting there three or four thousand miles from "Obe" and danger, said it would never do to let the natives imagine they could poison a governor! So my agreeable friend was returning to face his enemies and assert the principle that a president cannot be poisoned. What if they *had* poisoned him?

A propos of the president's government, he told us that his council or island parliament legislated in accordance with the personal interests of the majority. If the merchants succeeded in getting the prepon-

derance, they abolished taxation on imports, and laid the burthen on the estates of the planters, who, when their turn came, simply reversed the process. On one occasion there was a proposal to tax donkeys, of which large numbers had been imported into the island for the porterage of produce, a labour usually performed by blacks. One of the legislators—himself a large importer of donkeys—enraged at this proposal, made a speech in the council, indignantly concluding: "I can only say, if donkeys are to be taxed, it's time I left the island."

Wonderful, too, were the tales of our friend "the dog-stealer"—no harm meant by the appellation. It is *lucus a non*, for an honest fellow was our Lima friend. He is telling us of his last voyage:—

"Last time I came out—eh? there were three bishops and about twenty ecclesiastics—eh? going to the council. There was great fun—eh? The Archbishop of L—— was one—eh? He was a comfortable little man—eh? He liked well his glass—eh? One Sunday morning there was a service, and he was to preach—eh? I happened to go down to the saloon, and the archbishop and one of the priests—his secretary, eh?—were sitting taking something out of a bottle—eh? I spoke to him, and he said—'This is a most delicious drink; I have never tasted it before.' I said, 'What is it?' 'Whiskey!' 'Oh,' I said, 'whiskey, I know it very well.' They were drinking it neat—eh? I called for another bottle and mixed some for them—eh? and we finished the bottle. You should have seen the archbishop—eh? He could

scarcely stand up for the service, and when the time came to give the sermon he had to take hold of the bench and go along so—eh? He could only say a few sentences—eh? He went to his cabin, and we never saw him again during the voyage—eh? The captain was a jolly fellow—big, fat, full of fun; and every morning he used to say to the ecclesiastics (he talked Spanish well), 'Ah! his grace the archbishop, how is he to-day? Is his grace still *mareado*—eh?' You know *mareado* is Spanish for *sea-sick;* but then it also means sometimes what you call *tight*—eh?"

Spite of the fine weather, our progress was slow, so that we did not pass Sombrero until a fortnight from the day on which we left Southampton, steaming by the way close to Terceira, and just sighting Pico. It seemed to my eyes, after the sea-sick days which had dragged so heavily, as if these Eden-like Western islands were the better land wherein we ought to stay and gain some solace for our purgatory of the deep. So green, so softened in the haze, basking so sweetly in the sun amid the fair waves, with vineyards and orange groves, and the little white cottages dotting the hillsides, I think if I wished some Rasselas retreat I should seek it in one of these glorious isles of the sea.

St. Thomas is a pretty place, as you steam in between the fair lips of its harbour, and see it rising round the basin formed by the green hills, its red roofs and white walls brightening in the sun. But a few whiffs of its air oppress you. It is a fever furnace by construction. The thick waters of the harbour seem to change but seldom, and a hurricane there

ought to be a blessing as a sanitary revolution. I did not land, but watched the busy scene about the ship, and tried to forget the fever heat that came throbbing off the shore. Round the steamer swarmed the Negro boatmen in crafts of fancy names—"Champagne Charlie," "My Eyes' Darling," and the like. They were kept away from the gangways with difficulty; but I observed that a little carbolic acid thrown by the boatswain upon a sturdy black monster produced a striking effect, not only on him, but on the enthusiasm of his rivals. Large lighters laden with coal were soon alongside the *Seine*. Young Negro women, scantily clothed, garments tucked up above the knee, carried the coal into the steamer on their heads in baskets, chattering and singing the while. I have seen few English navvies work so hard or so persistently; but they were paid by the basket. No Negro man I afterwards saw in the West Indies came up to these girls in energy and vigour.

Here we were transferred into a smaller steamer, the *Mersey*. Going on board this vessel, I observed a jolly-looking gentleman in a light coat and a straw hat, whose build was after the lines of Daniel Lambert. This proved to be the captain. Another individual was racked gymnastically on a seat and its back at full length. He was the captain's reverse as to size, and turned out to be the purser. Captain Herbert treated me with great kindness on my way home, and I owe him my gratitude. The purser needs no comment.

For three days we steamed past the wondrous islands, furrowed, ribbed, and riven, lifting up their shaggy heads into the clear sky, while below they nourished here and there in pretty laps an exquisitely bright green vegetation.

The glory of Dominica and of Martinique is inde scribable—their luxuriant, savage beauty, their lofty peaks, long jagged defiles, crowded with rich vegetation, and the occasional stretch of vales, smooth with sugar-canes when seen from the water, but no doubt rough enough to the toilers in their marshy furrows. At St. Lucia, where we arrived after midnight, we transhipped into the *Arno*—not a pleasant operation, though a change for the better. With us to its captain was transhipped the news of his child's death at home. Not seen for two years—not to be seen again. Part of the great tragedy of English world-wide enterprise; in this case touching a true, manly heart. A clean ship, pleasant officers, and fair weather conjoined to support our spirits, rather drooping after nearly three weeks of the sea.

At Barbadoes we left most of our passengers, among them my friends the General and Mrs. M., their lively little daughter, and those ever-pleasant, fun-dispensing officers of the staff. After we had seen them off in the large garrison boat, the remnant of us turned morose, and looked rather scurvily at each other for some hours.

At last, on Thursday afternoon, July the 7th, the officers went forward with their glasses to look for the lightship. Hurrah! There she is, ten miles off;

we shall be in by five o'clock. For fifty miles out we have been cleaving a dirty green liquid, tinged by the mud of the Essequibo, Demerara, perhaps even the Orinoco. Now we are in simple dun ditch-water, and the active negro on the paddle-box, singing out the fathoms as he casts the lead, informs us that our floating resources are dwindling. Here's the light-ship rolling in the swell, and here's the bar whereon we stick fast, but, after several runs at the obstacle, at length cut through into Demerara water. The shore at this short distance looks no more than a long line of low bank with a light palisade of cocoa and cabbage palms marked against the sky. In front we presently see a stretch of sea-wall and some white houses: that is the garrison. Round the corner of the wall and past the lighthouse we glide into a river—the broad, brown river—and at our left reach away the flats, the stellings, the stores and sheds, the low white jalousied houses, over which, everywhere, graceful cabbage-palms spread their green wings. This is Georgetown, Demerara. Thermometer 85° Fahr., time five P.M.

CHAPTER III.

GEORGETOWN, DEMERARA.

A LARGE place, and a busy one. Here is a wide, muddy river, well hampered with shipping, from the beautifully-modelled schooners and sloops of Orinoco to the large iron Coolie vessels of the Forth or the Tyne—alive, too, with small craft. The air was oppressive even in the late afternoon. The tide was out, and had left exposed along the shore, and beneath the stellings or jetties, a fetid, ombreish mud, very suggestive of yellow fever to a fresh and doubting stranger. My friend M.—planter, merchant, shipper, legislator, and good fellow all in one—rescued me from the troublesome inquisitiveness of the custom-house officers, and in a short time I was walking up a broad street to the hotel—Beckwith's, said to be the best in the West Indies—three Negroes carrying my traps on their heads. I had landed on a mud-bank as flat as a billiard-table. The wide streets are bisected and intersected by canals and open drains, which strike me unpleasantly. I should have thought worse of it had I known, what I afterwards discovered, that these drains can only be emptied at

low water. Yet my first reflection is, that if any one retains health with such surroundings, it is no small evidence of natural stamina. On either side of the streets are two-storied wooden houses, erected on brick pillars, and generally furnished with jalousied verandahs. Round them, often in rich profusion, are splendid shrubs—the flamboyant, the oleander, the frangipanni—and towering over these the cocoa or cabbage palm, the tamarind, and other tropical trees. So that looking down some of the best streets, the effect, with the smooth, broad canals, fringed with a yard or two of grass, is very pretty—albeit very Dutch. The large amount of land appropriated to streets, gardens, and drainage requires for the population of some thirty thousand people a very extensive area, and the town stretches back from and along the river on a square of three or four miles. As the streets are laid out at right angles, the distances are, like those of Washington, "magnificent." It was therefore no small comfort to me to discover, the day after my arrival, that Anthony Trollope's hint about cabs had been taken, and that very decent vehicles could be hired at any time of day for one shilling sterling a quarter of an hour. Horses in the tropics are constructed to go at a uniform rate of speed; hence this arrangement is not so unfair as time contracts in London are apt to be.

Here we are at the hotel. Mine host is as stout and jolly an Englishman as the wolds of Yorkshire ever saw—a cattle farmer too—and mine hostess a kindly English lady, who forthwith recognises in me a big

tropical baby, and treats me accordingly with infinite maternal benevolence. Beckwith's first floor is simply a wide verandah with a couple of large rooms inside it, the principal being devoted to the gentlemen for all purposes but sleeping. I am shown along a passage to a chamber as comfortable as the house contains—"Where Sir George Young slept, sir!"—papered over the boards, the upper part of the partition consisting of open lattice-work. I can hear almost everything that is going on through the house. The heavy heels of the gentleman above me chronicle his motions; I can tell to a nicety when he throws off his boots, hangs up his coat, doffs his clothes and casts them on a chair, winds up his watch, and jumps into bed; nay, in the morning he produces an earthquake when he rubs the Macassar into his hair. I can hear the gentleman who has been to a dinner-party roll along the passage, and pitch head foremost through his door. I can hear him swearing at his shins for knocking against the chairs; and, should he be taken with the nausea of intoxication, I am forced to accord him an unwilling sympathy. But is not everything as audible in every Demerara dwelling? With all this, Beckwith's is as comfortable an hotel as heat and Negro servants will admit of in those latitudes.

In half an hour I am seated at dinner at the *table d'hôte*. Looking round curiously—it is rather crowded, being mail-day—I find I am among gentlemen. They are mostly of the Planter kin. They all know who I am, and on what unpleasant business

I have come among them; but they neither stare nor seem to make remark. My neighbour talks genially about the climate, though much engaged in consuming what, out of the tropics, would be an honest couple of dinners to a hearty man. A stranger comes up to me, and offers to introduce me to the club—an old Rugbean, a Cambridge graduate, a travelled man, a gentleman—and afterwards in every way to me a friend was R. T. H., who thus genially tendered kindness to a stranger. A waiter approaches me with a tray and glasses, and says that Mr. C. desires the favour of wine with me. In fact, I am put at my ease immediately. As for impertinent commissions, and busy philanthropists, and troublesome inquiries, and cross-examinations, leave those to the future—sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Meantime, here is a waif cast upon Demerara hospitality, and Demerara hospitality is large-hearted, honest, and genial. Therefore, when I go over to the club, pressing offers of "swizzles" come from all quarters, and I am told that honorary members are, by a rule of the club, forbidden to pay for their "drinks." I cannot say that I avoided swizzles in British Guiana; but I took them cautiously. A swizzle consists of a little water and sugar, a good deal of gin or brandy, and a dessert-spoonful of Angostura bitters, into which is thrown some scraped ice, and the whole is rapidly whirled round by a small stick with branchlets of an inch long. When it looks like a cool muddy froth it is taken down without stopping. I should be inclined to back

against fever the man who never took a swizzle—though some of the oldest inhabitants have taken them persistently for years. They are seductive and dangerous, with just enough of tonic element to make them plausibly medicinal, just enough of stimulating property to attract one wearied with the incessant heat; but without much vigorous self-control I am convinced that the first is, as a rule, a step to the second, and an appetite for stimulants in such a climate as that is a deadly snare.

The club at Georgetown is, to the gentlemen, its most important institution. It is a huge wooden building, not without architectural pretensions, consisting of two floors—the club-room below, and a concert-room above. In the club-room are three billiard-tables; outside it, on the windward side, a large verandah, with tables for cards. Here, early in the morning, a few old stagers come before breakfast to take their swizzles; and in the afternoon almost every gentleman in the colony, who has nothing to do and is conveniently near, lounges from four to six. There is no charge for the billiard-tables, no high play, and the exercise is just arduous enough for a thermometer at 80°. I said this was an important institution for gentlemen; the ladies, unfortunately, have nothing to correspond. The huge room up-stairs is rarely used for balls or concerts. The Demerara folk complain loudly of their salaried leaders of society. It is even alleged that, although these receive an allowance for special entertainment, it is but meagrely applied; nay, it has lately been

stated with some heat by the "planters' organ," that those who ought to be the heads of every amusement, as well as of graver matters, are more interested in securing a competency for old age than in maintaining the dignity of colonial office. I heard this complaint in other parts of the West Indies, and I fear the representatives of her Majesty in some of these colonies have more reputation for thrift in their own affairs than for ability of administration. I have said that you find yourself, in Georgetown, amongst *gentlemen*—men, some of them well born, some of them well educated—full of ideas of sugar and commerce, yet once of good English or Scotch school and university; shrewd capitalists, but also sagacious observers of public affairs. I was at times almost ashamed to find how much they knew of English contemporary history. This strikes you everywhere in the colonies. It is partly owing to the many good summaries of intelligence which the home or colonial press supplies, and which often descend to minute details without involving the perusal of indifferent reflections or reports; but it is chiefly due to the lively zest for information which delay and distance breed in English-loving hearts. I am almost beginning to think that England is far dearer to exiled affections than to the cold contents of home.

Near the club is Georgetown Cathedral; that is, the Anglican cathedral. The Roman Catholics also have their cathedral and their bishop. The English cathedral is built in what I should call the Creole-Gothic style: a brick structure of the original design of a

West Indian barn, with spasmodic innovations of Gothic in such parts as the doors, windows, and chancel. In front of the latter was an extraordinary Gothic iron skeleton of elaborate workmanship, which constitutes the pulpit. This skeleton was a substitute for a more substantial oaken structure which stood for some years, and one day turned out to have been so catacombed by ants as to promise no further support to the clergy. There are galleries on both sides, and an organ loft and choir at the end. The choir looks picturesque, with its row of surpliced ebonies, woolly-pated and tin-voiced, but hearty withal in their singing and chanting. One thing was peculiarly homelike—the marble memorial tablets, with their hyperbolic eulogies and bad verses. Besides the white aristocracy, great numbers of coloured people attend, the women amazingly gay in their light muslins, brilliant shawls, and fashionable bonnets, while their hair is cruelly straightened and rolled into as near a resemblance to chignons as wool is capable of assuming.

The Presbyterians are powerful in the colony. Besides the number of Scotchmen imported, on account of the superior physique of that race, to be managers and overseers, there is a Dutch element, which naturally attaches itself to Presbyterianism. The State in British Guiana pays all denominations alike. The colony is divided into parishes, and at the time of the division each parish was called upon to designate its own form of religion. Hence some parish churches are Anglican, and others Presbyterian. The principal

Presbyterian church of Georgetown is a commodious wooden building, rivalling the cathedral in its style of architecture and appearance. It has a tolerably good choir, and an organ, played by a "Mus. Doc." of the United States, who is also a musical author, and has composed an extraordinary opera, entitled *Martella*, from which I once heard him sing a "recitative and song of a bandit," of such peculiar and heart-rending ferocity, as to convince me that his very sweet playing in the church was his happiest occupation. There it was refreshing to sit in the Administrator-General's pew, with one's head cooling against a vast ornamental tombstone behind, and listen to the organ sounding finely in the panelled auditorium, while the earnest voices of the people rolled out that quaint old psalm—

"Praise God, from earth below,
Ye dragons and ye deeps:
Fire, hail, clouds, wind and snow,
Whom in command he keeps.
Praise ye His name,
Hills great and small,
Trees low and tall,
Beasts wild and tame," &c. &c.

I was rather dashed to find that the Commission was not sitting. On the contrary, their operations were indefinitely postponed, and the two gentlemen had taken advantage of a lucky expedition to the interior to go and view the wonderful Kaiteur Falls, discovered by Mr. Brown. The truth was, that the planters were dissatisfied with the Commissioners.

They knew nothing of Sir George Young, and alleged they knew too much about Mr. Charles Mitchell. In fact, they thought the latter far too young and inexperienced. Moreover, they had doubts about his capacity for spelling! They said so plainly and appropriately enough in a deputation to the Governor, begging him to communicate with Lord Granville, and ask for another Commissioner; their organ, the *Colonist*, said so rudely, and with concomitant abuse of little credit to anybody actually or impliedly a party to it. So I was destined to wait six weeks for the new Commissioner.

When, the morning after my arrival, I slowly paced the hot streets under shadow of my umbrella, I marked with wonder the varieties of race, dress, aspect, of the people who thronged the wide business thoroughfare. With Saxon, Teuton, and Celt, in their white adaptations of European costume, there were blackest Africans, or tinted Creoles, or brown and copper Bengalees—the men's little loin-cloths, or *babbas*, leaving unswathed their polished limbs; the women, in slight, brilliant costumes, which set off their lithe figures and supple motions; yellow Chinamen in blue blouse and pigtail, with half-cunning, half-idiotic faces; once the short, staunch, brown figures of the aboriginal Indians (the "Bucks," as they are called), come from the interior to barter, the men, for the nonce, assuming some elementary garb of decency, but the women, with the modesty of innocence, absolutely reduced to no larger garment than the primitive fig-leaf. Was it not a surprise to see

such variety within a mile of street? But I was looking specially for my Coolies, and here they were. Not a few of them, well-made, handsome fellows, stepped along with light and vigorous swing, sometimes proudly sporting a shirt, or a white calico robe, or even a coat and trousers. Of the women, many bore the evidences of wealth. A tight-fitting velvet jacket, blue or maroon colour, with a short skirt, and round the bosom, and over the head, in graceful fold, a coloured scarf or muslin veil—and generally some silver or golden ornaments; bangles on the bare legs, bracelets on the brown, well-turned arms, necklets of coins, the English florin being a favourite, earrings massive and numerous. I saw as many as half-a-dozen in as many holes in each ear, and nose-rings of gold, perhaps enriched with a gem. Astride upon the hip, in Hindu fashion, some carried a black-eyed piece of infant nudity, also heavily laden with silver baubles. I could not refrain from asking myself: "Are these chains? Can these be the wretched objects of avaricious tyranny, or have I landed in the wrong place?" Yet that question did not always press upon me. For not every one of them appeared to have been equally good-fortuned. Nay, many carried little but their dirty babbas—thin, obvious sons of earth-toil, and mayhap of sorrow; a few old and weakening, a few Lazaruses, with lameness, impotence, or ugly sores for dogs to lick. Of the other immigrants, the Chinese were usually broad and even powerful-looking men, not often so indifferent to clothing as the Coolies. Indeed, of the

Chinese in Georgetown streets a large proportion were small shopkeepers from the country, busily driving bargains from store to store. It takes a Scotchman to match John Chinaman at shrewd barter,—I don't know whether this was the reason for the number of the Caledonian ilk who served behind the shop counters.

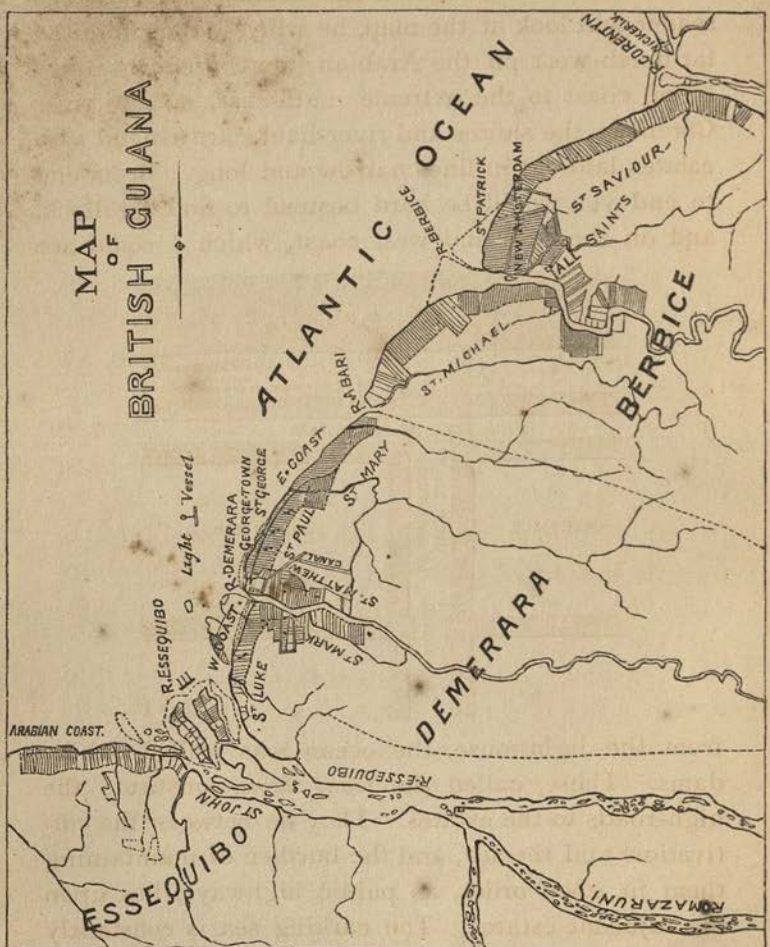
Such, then, were my clients as I saw them the first day in the streets of the capital.

CHAPTER IV.

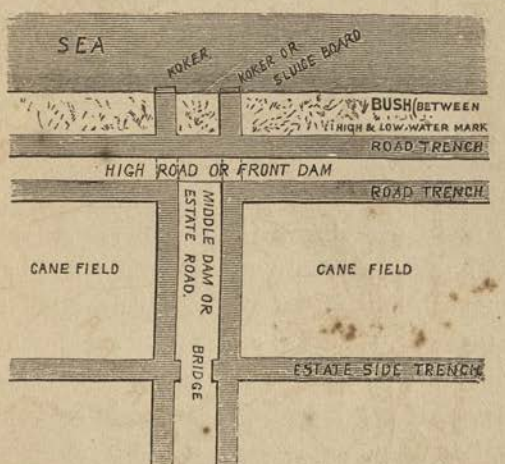
THE ESTATES—WINDSOR FOREST.

FIVE days after my landing I set out in the morning with my friend, R. T. H., to visit Windsor Forest and Haarlem, two estates belonging to the Colonial Company. This company owns a large number of estates in the colony, besides others in Trinidad and elsewhere. Little freshness has early morning in Demerara: the fiery globe sends its horizontal beams along the landscape, striking madly on your face and "knocking you silly," as my ingenious friend the A D C. had expressed it on board the *Arno*.

Windsor Forest was over the river, and some three or four miles down the coast. On reaching the stelling we found that the asthmatic steamer which was to have ferried over ourselves and our "trap" had been obliged to knock off for a few hours, and her substitute—a still more invalid creature—was not yet ready, so we whiled away the time by ascending the lighthouse, an operation which was like climbing up a mammoth red-hot corkscrew in a chimney flue. I never did it again. But here we are at the top, looking far away over the flat country, and this


MAP
OF
BRITISH GUIANA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
BERBICE
DEMERARA
ESSEQUIBO
R. ESSEQUIBO
R. DEMERARA
R. ABARI
R. BERBICE
GEORGETOWN
St GEORGE
E. COAST
W. COAST
St PAUL
St MATTHEW
St MARK
St LUKE
St MARY
St PATRICK
NEW AMSTERDAM
St SAVIOUR
ALL SAINTS
ST MICHAEL
ARABIAN COAST.
ST JOHN
Light & Vessel
ROMAZARUNI

affords me an opportunity of describing the general face of the field on which the Coolie works. If the reader will look at the map, he will see that from the far north-west on the Arabian (more properly Aroebisce) coast to the extreme south-east, on the river Corentyn, the shores and river-banks are fringed with estates laid out in lines narrow and long. From end to end you would be hard bestead to find a hillock, and on the east and west coast, which I could see



from the lighthouse, the ocean was walled out by dams. These, called the *front dams*, constitute the high-roads to the estates. They lie between the cultivation and the sea, and the burthen of maintaining them in good order, as public highways, lies upon the adjacent estates. The carking sea is constantly eating his way into these huge works, so that thousands of pounds have been spent by the Colonial Company alone in resisting his encroachments. As

there is no stone within fifty miles, the roads are topped with clay roughly burned into brick. On either side of the dam are broad deep trenches or canals. Into these, on the land side, strike, at right angles, the *middle dams* of the estates with their two long drainage and navigation trenches. The rough diagram on the previous page will give some notion of the relative positions.

The plantations vary in breadth, but I was told there were some as narrow as two hundred rods. Their lines run "back" a prodigious length—four, five, or even six miles to the Savannah; no pleasant meadow, but a great watery swamp, covered with rank yet magnificent vegetation, wilds where man rarely if ever roams, and whence in the rainy season sweeps down a deluge of brown bush-water. Against this incursion the cautious manager erects his *back dam*. The intermediate space of the quadrangle between this and the front dam is crossed at regular intervals by side trenches, cutting the estate into rectangular fields for the canes. These fields again are subdivided by smaller trenches and drains, till the wonderful system brings you at last to a *bed*—a space nine feet wide by thirty-six feet long; and here, with the drainage and drilling to make it comfortably dry, grows the juicy cause of all this labour and of the Coolie question in Demerara. It is said that on one estate alone there are sixty miles of trench-work. No nation but the Dutch would ever have attempted so gigantic a water-system on such a mud-bank as the one stretched out below me. This water-system pre-

vails through the whole colony, and there are many abandoned estates on which you may mark the remains of the Dutchman's marvellous energy to this day. One could not help thinking, as one looked at these traces of the old slave times, how many tears and drops of blood had flown down those still trenches, carrying to the ocean the strength and hopes of thousands of our fellow-men. Now, however, they are chiefly maintained by free labour, the blacks far surpassing the Coolies in the qualifications for this heavy and dexterous clay-cutting. If we cannot help wondering at the Dutch, neither can we withhold the meed of admiration from our British fellow-countrymen, whose capital and energy are freely spent in works so costly and gigantic. When I looked at the little English community of British Guiana, and compared its numbers with what it was doing, I had no hesitation in according to them the palm among all the vigorous money-makers I have ever seen in any quarter of the world.

But let us look out from the lantern a moment or two longer. East, west, and southward up the river-banks we see the tall chimneys of the sugar-buildings, throwing up into the clear day their jets of smoke. There is Bel-air, Turkeyen, La Pénitence, Ruinveldt, Rome, and Houston, its fine palm avenue springing up into the air, and beyond the river, Vriedenhoop, and Versailles, and Malgrétout. The names of estates, it will be seen, are international. Some are romantic. Bathsheba's Lust, Vryheid's Lust, Beterverwagting, Maria's Pleasure, De Kinderen, all

seem tokens of some quaintness in the namers. But you should hear a Chinese try to pronounce some of these names.

Descending the corkscrew, we are in half an hour across the river and driving along the dam. After passing one or two abandoned estates we come to a village, with all the wretched characteristics of Negro habitats in this colony. Small wooden rattle-trap sheds in a dirty yard or rank half-cultivated garden, undrained—a perfect morass in the rainy weather; the men and women sunning themselves on any dry spot, the naked youngsters rolling in their native mud; and, most curious mark of all, a white-frilled or embroidered petticoat and a muslin dress bleaching on some scraggy aloe for next Sunday's chapel. Here and there along the road is a Portuguese shop, more neat and clean than the homes of its patrons. Opposite we see some estates' houses for the Coolies. They look in this instance bad enough. There is a magistrate living within sight of them, and his hospitable flag waves an invitation to breakfast, but we cannot stay. The houses are all old sheds of wood, and huts of wattled palm. I was repeatedly assured that the Coolies preferred these rude tabernacles of their own construction, with their clay floors, to the best houses you could build them. In one case I was shown one built by a Chinese during Sunday, into which he had moved his family from a new wooden cottage, and from which the manager did not like to evict him. The mud about them, however, the fetid lines of drains, so called because

the water never runs out of them, are not necessary concomitants of an immigrant's home. Yet here were many lissom, brown younglings, born and bred in these dubious places, running about naked in the sun, or undergoing at their mother's hands the process of cerebral investigation or of anointing with oil. One little bright-eyed imp, with a solitary garment on—a silver dollar suspended by a string round the waist—runs out and cries to us "How dee, Massa?" Happy little Eveling, who even in these quarters is as yet in her garden of Eden!

We are passing cane-fields, and at length turn sharp off the road—no fences or gates here—up an indifferent avenue of tamarinds; seeing on the left the range of immigrants' dwellings, still called the Negro yard; on the right the overseers' house and the hospital; pulling up at length opposite a garden blooming with splendid shrubs and flowers, among which stands the broad-galleried house of the manager. Except the garden, everything on the estate is rough and ready. The bank and trench in front of the Coolie cottages are muddy and unclean—such a state of things as you may see in Ireland or the Highlands of Scotland, where drainage is casual—*i.e.*, conducted by the housewife's arm straight out of the door or window. I was not asked to visit these houses, but shall be able to describe those of other estates.

Before breakfast we had time to view *the buildings*, the work in which I must describe in detail. They consist of huge sheds protecting the machinery from the weather. On many estates they are new and

well built, on others antiquated and rickety; but hurricanes never test British Guianian architecture. So long as the rain keeps out, what matter? We cross the megass yard, at the rainy season a stretch of fine black mud. This stuff is a mixture of soil with the fetid lees from the rum-still. A whiff from it before breakfast tests your stomach sadly. I saw some Creole Africans digging in it for the foundation of a new still-room, and fairly ran away, wondering how they could live in the effluvium for ten minutes. To dispose of the lees is a problem not yet solved in Demerara. Whether they are useful as manure is a disputed question; and the cost of collecting, storing, and distributing over back lands would be very great. In one case, on the estates of the Messrs. Ewing, I saw elaborate preparations made for distributing and utilizing them. I understood that the experiment would cost nearly £2,000 sterling. Between fear of expense and laziness, the planters have generally suffered the dregs to overspread the large yards of their buildings, impregnating the damp soil with dangerous filth, and dispensing sometimes for miles a nauseous stench. I was told of an instance of the death of several Coolies, unused to the country, through their having been inadvertently quartered in a house too near such a yard. When I mention that one of the finest houses in the colony —that at Houston—has a lees yard to windward of it, no one can in this regard suspect of malicious cruelty to Coolies persons who are so cruel to themselves.

Long ranges of open sheds at the side of the yard are filled with what look like dried shavings, which bare-legged Coolie women and boys are carrying swiftly in baskets to a row of fires, where men thrust them in with long iron feeders. This is megass. Entering the grinding-room, we see at once what megass is, for here is a huge machine at work. From the shed to the adjacent canal, on an incline, stretches a covered way. A punt-load of canes fresh from the fields is discharging. The canes vary in length from two to five feet, and are one to two inches in diameter. Coolies in the punt lay the canes on a broad traveller, up which they pass slowly, other Coolies meanwhile picking out the defective stalks and trash. At the top they are gripped by two iron rollers, which draw them into their ponderous jaws, and with Titanic force squeeze out the juice, leaving a flattened fibre—megass—to pass out beyond. Coolies receive it in large boxes, and wheel it away to the megass *logie* or shed.

From the sides of the machine runs out the slatey-coloured liquid into a well, whence it is pumped up to clarifiers, which are heated with steam-pipes. Indian and Chinese men, with boy assistants, all reeking with the damp swelter, manage the clarifiers, and when they have prepared the juice, allow it to run down wooden troughs to the copper-wall—a range of brick furnaces, thirty feet or more in length, in which are sunk huge iron hemispheres called "coppers." We ascend the stage and watch the juice boiling violently, while the naked Chinese deftly

sweep away the scum with large flat blades of wood. Hot work, my masters! All this boiling is produced by the burning megass, which we saw the women carrying just now.

Up into the pitch of the shed rises the shining dome of the vacuum-pan, whither the syrup is pumped from the copper-wall, and where it is boiled again. Re-descending to the floor, we find the result in a tank of thick brown matter. Take up an inch on your finger, you see among the molasses the sugar crystals. Sleek and swarthy Chinamen fill their wooden troughs here, and empty them into the centrifugals—a row of hollow drums, which, revolving rapidly, drive the crystals to the side of the drum and the molasses through its sieve-like lining, until the pure white sugar is left there clinging to the side like a snow-drift. Other workmen empty the drums and convey the contents to the sifting-room, where—shall I tell it?—I saw a couple of naked fellows walking about in the piled-up sweetness as they worked the sifter. Our sugar is now ready for its huge hogsheads. I need not follow the molasses to its cisterns, or the dregs to the rum-still. The very sweepings of the floors are made available. A bottle of the stuff from which fine rum is made, if hung up alongside the article, would preach a temperance sermon to many a stomach. Lastly, we visit the steam-engine and boilers, all of best Scotch or English make, the fires fed from numerous hogsheads of coal lying about the yard. The Negroes, and occasionally the Chinese, make good engineers.

Altogether from sixty to eighty people may be at work in the buildings. It is hard sustained labour. How many hours? Mr. Russell, the planter of planters, said in his evidence, twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours. Many Coolies afterwards complained to me of long hours in the buildings—twenty or even twenty-four, they said, at a stretch. The statement must be taken subject to the fact that most of the work done in the buildings is done by task, and not paid for by time. But, as we shall see by-and-by, the Commissioners have some serious things to report about this excessive labour. The gist of the Coolies' complaint was that they had no extra pay for it. Mr. Russell, on the other hand, stated that on his estates they had. It may be found that a good deal depends on the pressure for "grinding." If the estate has enough labourers, the gangs can be relieved; if not, the same people may at times be forced to go on. Canes get sour if not soon ground after cutting, so that there is a temptation to push to the utmost. But let us look at home. A London printer told me that some of his men worked forty-eight and sixty hours at a stretch. I cannot help thinking that a little trades-unionism brought to bear in a legitimate way on the permission of such suicides as that would be a healthy thing. To me it is no palliation to say that the labourer is paid for his extra work. You cannot pay a man for exhausted tides of life, and shorter years, and a premature old age. Surely, whether it is sugar or instruction, mankind must stand by and wait for it while the purveyors take

their needed rest. Nay, we the public are taking terrible lessons about this sort of thing in the results of the long hours on our railways.

This hospital I will not describe, as I visited larger ones thereafter. I saw a few wretched invalids, male and female, squatting in Indian fashion on their haunches in the verandah, and others fever-stricken on the beds. It was airy and in good order.

Breakfast! Anthony Trollope was not too enthusiastic about Demerara breakfasts—they are right noble meals. My host was a powerful Scotchman, and peculiarly interested in the Commission. There were Coolies nursing nice grudges against him. Of this I was ignorant as I sat at the board groaning with its hospitality. It required some nerve after a meal like that to go out into the mid-day sunshine and get on a stubborn mule to perform the feat technically called "going back," that is, up the middle walk to the back dam through the cultivation. Mule and I established proper relations fortunately; for the air was that of an oven, the glare that of a furnace. I was wet through in a moment in the exercise of mounting, and had not my hack permitted me to carry an umbrella over my head, would not, I verily believe, have survived the trial.

Along the dam, three mules in file. Here first are Coolies leading the mules which drag the deeply-laden punts down the canals to the factory. Their babbas are toil-stained, and their brown skins, dotted with mud, look dry in the terrible heat. Some wear old turbans or caps, some face the sun with no

covering but their thick black hair. They salute us gravely as we pass. The middle walk is muddy, full of holes, with constant breaks for the rickety wooden bridges this shape over the cross trenches, and encumbered by the rapidly-growing weeds. My mule and umbrella agree; but I am an undistributed middle. Down the trench comes a Coolie wading to his breast, dragging a load of floating brushwood for his home fire. The sun flames upon the water and glints over his slippery limbs. Next an Indian woman, choosing the same damp causeway, who, with pretty modesty, dips up to the neck in the brown water, and watches us soberly with her great black eyes.

We have been passing fields of young cane, and the light gangs, consisting of women and weakly men, are weeding among them. I have explained that a bed is a space about nine feet by thirty-six. Through this again lengthwise run shelving drains, dividing it into spaces. The canes are planted along these in what are called cane-holes. On one side is a clean bank, on the other a trash-bank. You may take the field, therefore, to be reduced to three-feet spaces. Mr. Russell, in his evidence, showed how this simplified calculation for wages or expenses. "The fields are always laid out in three-feet spaces, and to those who understand decimals, it is a nice way of calculating work. There are one hundred such beds to an acre, so if you pay one cent for each bed, it amounts to one dollar an acre; eight cents per bed, to eight dollars an acre." The young canes may

be two or three feet high. The weeders hoe out the weeds from the nine-feet space, and lay them on a three-feet space adjoining. Weeds in British Guiana are incredible plagues—vicious, pertinacious, domineering, tolerant of no other vegetation beside them, growing out and up and over everything with rankness and rapidity. The work is done generally by the task. A man or woman agrees with the overseer to do one or more "openings" for a sum certain. An opening is the number of nine by thirty-six feet spaces across the field—that is, twelve of those beds taken in a straight line. At this work, a new immigrant working steadily might make, on a good estate, one shilling sterling in about six hours; or supposing him to work from six A.M. till twelve noon every day but Sunday—and few will do more than five days' work—his earnings would be six shillings a week. But a large proportion cannot even make that. When we come to consider the Immigration Law we shall find that the minimum of work required from him is five tasks of one shilling in value, or five shillings' worth per week.

A couple of miles back we come across the cane-cutters. They are the strongest Coolies on the estate, or more frequently African Creoles. They also take their work by the opening. At each end of the opening runs the canal, and our cutter must pile his canes on the bank ready for the punts. Stripped to a rag, he takes his cutlass, a peculiar weapon in one piece, and cutting off the cane near the ground, trims away the long leaves and head. This head forms the plant

or seedling to supply again the fields from which it is cut, or new land brought into cultivation. The leaf-trimmings, called *trash*, are gathered up by the weeding gang, and laid on the bank alongside the cane-holes. There it dries and rots, and is then buried in the middle of the trash-bank as manure. When he has cut one hundred canes, the cutter, gathering them into a bundle weighing perhaps a hundred pounds, carries them on his head to the canal. If he is cutting in the middle beds, he has to cross and recross five beds, and the intermediate drains to the water and back again. No wonder he streams with the sweat of toil. At such work as this a strong man may make, it was said, two or three guilders or more a day. A guilder is 1*s.* 4*d.* Some of the Coolies were magnificent men. Their tall figures, deep broad chests, and moulded limbs, showed that they, at all events, could show good fight to want. Several had been Sepoys in India. A few of such men I saw elsewhere engaged in another operation, trench-digging. The subsoil is like the London blue clay. Digging out a trench seven feet deep and twelve or fifteen wide, you see a dozen mud-spattered fellows, with convex shovels like long scoops, having handles six feet in length. Standing firmly on his feet, every muscle in tension, the labourer drives the scoop into the clay by the action of his arms and shoulders, lightly throwing it twenty feet or so out of the trench. Good hands are fond of this work, and earn a dollar a day at it.

We went all the way to the back dam, tiring of the

endless rows of canes, albeit a splendid cultivation, round to Haarlem estate, down its middle walk, and, after seven miles of it, my face and brain on fire, I was glad to get under the cover of the trap, and drive rapidly against the air.

CHAPTER V.

SCHOON ORD.

ON the 19th of July I accompanied Mr. Black, of the firm of Samuel Barber and Co., to visit Schoon Ord, on the west bank of the Demerara river. This is one of the finest properties in the colony. Crossing once more to the Pouderoyen stelling, we diverged to the left instead of the right, driving past other plantations, and through two or three freehold villages occupied by blacks and Portuguese. The contrast presented on opposite sides of the road was remarkable, and is worthy the attention of those who make the Negro's cause specially their own. The Portuguese, mostly from Madeira and other islands, are as acclimatised as any of white blood can be—so much so that they can work in the sun, and their little children sustain its fiery rays bareheaded. But the Creole Africans are perfectly acclimatised. This is the *beau idéal* of a climate for them. In it they thrive, are muscular and well-conditioned. If there was in them any corresponding energy, they could of themselves double the production of British Guiana, and enhance their own position. There must be at least

seventy thousand of them distributed through the colony, many living on small freeholds purchased after the apprenticeship. On these they squat, listless about anything but a full stomach and an occasional gala dress, working, when necessity impels them to it, three days or even less a week, suspicious always about the price of their labour. Wherefore should they work? The plantain and the yam supply their wants: with the mango and various other fruits they help out their table, and the trenches everywhere yield abundance of fish. You may find such people in the environs of Georgetown; but I am referring more particularly to the straggling villages in the country. There was such a village on our right, consisting of dirty, tumble-down structures, surrounded by rank vegetation, around and amid which we could see men, or women, or children, stretched in what seemed to be a perpetual siesta. On our left better and brighter houses, with cultivation about them, and the evidences of trade or thrifty activity, marked the homes of the Portuguese.*

Here is Schoon Ord. Turning out of the road, we pass a neat house pointed out as the doctor's—for this great estate boasts its resident physician. The manager's house stands behind a handsome garden, wherein the bread-fruit, lime, orange, papau, banana, cocoa-nut and cabbage palms rise above splendid shrubs and flowers. We were welcomed by the manager, Mr. Arnold, a man hale and well on in

* In Appendix B there will be found, extracted from the Commissioners' Report, an interesting account of the various labour-classes of British Guiana.

life—thirty years in the colony, and only two months away! The capitalist who owns this estate had, with great pluck and persistency, and spite of doubtful nodding of colonial wiseacres, expended on its development an immense sum, sunk in buildings and vacuum-pans, in centrifugals, in multitubular and Cornish boilers, in tramways, and in Coolie houses; but sunk to some purpose, for I was told that last year the estate netted an earl's income. And Schoon Ord has only 1,200 acres in cultivation.

I did not wish to "go back" again; I had had enough of that at Windsor Forest. We went through the buildings—few, if any, so large and complete in every way are to be seen in British Guiana, and even then new machinery was being erected to double the manufacturing power; but I need not describe again the interior of a sugar-house. Coming out of the factory, a surprise awaited me. There stood a long line of little children, of each sex and every shade of brown, from the delicate tint of the Madrassee to the ebony polish of the hill tribes. I looked at them carefully as they grinned a welcome, nothing to obstruct a clear survey of their figures. Most were sleek, well formed, and many handsome—the delicately-carved nostrils and little pouting lips, the well-rounded, finely-proportioned limbs, and the healthy elasticity of motion, suggesting a higher caste than I knew them to belong to. Some of the smallest chits wore silver bands on wrists and ankles, or a necklet of small coins. They called off their numbers in English, and then gave three cheers for

the strange Buckra gentleman. Thirty rows of teeth were shining at once, and sixty small arms waving lightly as they went away, some of them holding out their hands and crying, "How dee, Massa?" The sight did one good.

In the middle of its own field was the hospital. When I say field, do not picture to yourself a grass compound, but a surface of damp or hard-baked soil, according to the season, not very level. The building resembled the other hospitals of the colony —as our Chinese artist has represented them— two-storied, with wide galleries and open jalousies, allowing the air to play freely through. The lower ward was for men, the upper for women. A good English barn with a pine floor would give a fair idea of the interior. The beds were arranged in rows, and were simply constructed of painted wood; the mattresses and pillows stuffed with the cheap but sweet and soft dried leaves of the banana. To prove their quality, the officious nurse forced open a pillow and held it to my nose. The latrines are placed at the end of a covered passage, but so indolent are the patients that it is difficult to enforce the use of them. The men were lying or sitting listlessly on the beds —several with ulcers, often aggravated by the lazy or filthy habits of the patient. The Hindu is not generally strong in skin or bone. A man who had been a temporary sick-nurse in one of the hospitals told me that as an overseer he had sometimes given way to his wrath so far as to knock down a labourer, but at two *post-mortems* had an opportunity of comparing the

skull and ribs of a Negro and a Coolie. He was so startled at the difference—at the comparative weakness of the latter—that he never ran the risk of manslaughter again. As in India, so in Demerara, a very common cause of death is ruptured spleen, sometimes from comparatively slight shocks or excitement. Instead of being an excuse for its frequent occurrence, this susceptibility should be rather a reason for extra carefulness of treatment. Slight abrasions received in the field are difficult to heal in an Indian, and managers accuse the people of irritating their sores in order to escape work. On this ground stocks were kept in some of the hospitals—not at Schoon Ord certainly. Not to speak without book, I transcribe the evidence of the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, Dr. Shier:—"I have observed stocks, but not in all hospitals. They were forbidden very recently. When the present hospital system came in force there were already hospitals throughout the colony. They had existed under the old *régime*, and the stocks were in them, or at least in many of them. On the very first inspection I made, I discovered some of these stocks, and the matter was reported to the Executive. But on an attempt being made to remove these stocks by the Executive, some of the medical men intimated to the Governor that they were essentially necessary in hospitals in the treatment of patients. The Governor, not wishing to interfere with the medical men in their practice, did not order their removal, but made it a condition of using them that it should only be done by the medical attendant, and by an order in the

case-book. I may state that during the years I had visited these estates I have very seldom indeed found a case in which they had been used. A case, however, occurred about two years ago where an overseer in the absence of the manager, and without authority, placed an immigrant in the stocks. The result was that the manager lost his situation. It was on Plantation Affiance, Essequibo. In these stocks there was something peculiar. They had never been in the hospital before. They had been introduced. I only saw them once in the Court of Justice. I had never seen them on the estate. The apertures in the stocks appeared to be more elevated than in any I had ever seen, and the consequence was that unless the person confined in them had been placed in a chair, it would have been almost impossible to put him in. It was not done under pretence of treatment—I believe by way of punishment. The subject is one which has given *a very considerable* amount of *uneasiness* (?) to the Executive at all times; and on the very last occasion of its coming to the notice of the government they were suppressed entirely." The case here referred to occurred but a short time previous to my arrival in the colony. A Dr. Duffey had improperly confined in the stocks a woman named Putea; and Dr. Shier's naïve remark on this was, "When this case occurred, where a medical man had actually applied them to an improper use, *his Excellency said it was time they should be removed!*" It is no unfair comment on this, that "his Excellency" and his Excellency's predecessor were a long time in coming to this conclusion, after

the exhibition of tne "something peculiar" stocks of Plantation Affiance in a court of justice. The Commission have made a dry and caustic report on the stocks, to which I shall have occasion hereafter to allude.

A diet list in English, Hindu, and Chinese is hung up in the hospital, designating certain scales of diet. Over each bed the doctor ought to chalk the prescription and the diet, so that any patient who can read may check the administration of food and medicine. At Schoon Ord, doubtless, the patients receive good rations; but, as our Chinese satirist has hinted, there are estates on which that is a moot question.

We next reach the Negro-yard. To this place I always looked as affording the most trustworthy indication of the spirit of a manager towards his workpeople. Good houses and enforced cleanliness about them would show that he looked upon them as brother beings, not as mere brutish hinds. At Schoon Ord new ranges of cottages were in course of erection on a plan suggested by Dr. Shier. These were rows of well-built wooden sheds a single story high, each house consisting of one room, which reached to the pitch of the roof. They are set upon clay floors, raised about a foot or eighteen inches above the soil, to protect the inmates from the ground-damp. The provision for ventilation is good, but *that* the coloured races abhor. On the hottest night, as I observed both in Demerara and Barbadoes, half-a-dozen, crowding into such a room, will close tightly both doors and shutters. If, like the

European houses of the colony, these immigrant dwellings are raised on pillars or double-storied, they are rife with quarrels and dirt. The Chinese will utilise the under space as a pig-pen, or, taking up a board in the floor, convert the under part into a general cesspool. Or the upper-story people disturb the placidity of their lower neighbours by presenting them with uncalled-for surprises, either through the cracks of the floor or the open windows. This led Dr. Shier to devise the dwellings I have described, which are now generally adopted when new ones are required, but a large number of the old barracks still remain throughout the colony.

The back-roof of the ranges at Schoon Ord jutted out a few feet, enabling the women to use the shade for kitchen purposes. Here they had neatly-moulded clay fire-places for their pots. Along the verandah we could see the women preparing their food—some triturating the rice, and others boiling it in pots. I stepped into one of the rooms—closed and dark, the floor cleaned with chunam. A dirty piece of calico was hung up as a screen to divide the room into two parts. The furniture is a rough seat, a simple rickety bamboo cot, a few clothes hanging against the partition, some sticks and implements, a few pots, and a wood engraving from some penny weekly, Mr. Spurgeon, the Duke of Wellington, or President Lincoln —I forget which, and certainly the inmates did not know or care. Not a place you or I would like to stay in long; but give the Coolie twice the money he earns, and it is doubtful if he would desire a better

home. Let him have rice, a little curry, some oil to anoint himself withal—cover his wife with silver ornaments, and dress her in a gala dress—invest his own person, when off work, with a clean white babba and a gay cap or muslin turban, or, better still, a bright scarlet uniform of some *ex*tinguished regiment —and your Coolie will not thank you for a furnished house. At least, that was the impression I gathered. It seemed to me the Chinese were much more anxious to have comfortable homes, and their ideas of living were far in advance of Indian notions.

Along the ranges are trenches. In scarcely any estate I visited were these properly drained and cleaned. The unconquerable flatness of the ground presents great difficulties; but zeal and a single Coolie told off to the labour might keep the surroundings of the yard more neat and healthy—would, I am certain, save in the better condition of the people all the cost of the work.

Several of the women were laden with silver—so much so as to excite my wonder that it did not impede their usefulness. Three or four rings of solid silver, as thick as one's little finger, rattling round their ankles, must have tried their endurance. One rather handsome woman wore large bangles, several heavy armlets, two necklets of rod silver, one or two more composed of silver coins, gold rings in her ears and nose, and several on her fingers.

"Well, how dee?"

"How dee, Massa?"

"Very rich," said the manager, at which she

laughed softly. She was flattered by our examination of her ornaments.

"She has a lot of cows, and plenty money in the savings-bank. How many cow?"

She held up seven fingers.

"She pays a man to take care of them. How many dollar in bank?"

She shrugged her shoulders. She did not care to tell that.

I believe some man lived with her as her reputed husband, perhaps the cowherd aforesaid, but her wealth was probably acquired at the price of her honour. Hitherto not the least serious defect in the Coolie system, as I shall have occasion in discussing it to show, has been the deficiency of women. Efforts have latterly been made to remedy this, and the proportion of women to men is now nearly forty per cent.*

There are still at Schoon Ord several houses of the old two-storied type, which, judged by a European standard, would be considered questionably fit for human beings. But you may see as bad, or worse, in Ireland, and some Scotch Highlanders revel in no better.

Round the Chinese quarter were attempts at gardening. Women were working up the ground with hearty good-will. They wear the blue cotton costume of their country, and their hair is as elaborately unnatural in its contortions as that of any English belle. Under a shed of one of the

* 10,000 women to 29,000 is the proportion stated by the Commissioners.

houses was a sturdy Chinaman, amusing himself with the ladies of his family. He was not disconcerted by the manager's gentle hint.

"Ah! no gone to work to-day, Ching-ching?"

"No. No think work."

To complete the view of this estate I may add a statement of the numbers at work, and the wages paid and earned on it, placed at my disposal by its frank and able proprietor in London, to whom I am indebted, not only for much information, but for a great deal of kindness shown me through his influence in British Guiana. He says—"The number of indentured immigrants at Schoon Ord at the time of your visit was—

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
Indian Coolies .	272	116	62	450
Chinese	114	2	2	118
Africans	2	0	0	2
Total . .	388	118	64	570

"The numbers at work on Friday of each of the four weeks in August were—

	Buildings.	Field.	Hospital.	Off.
Friday 5th .	76	450	19	25
,, 12th .	76	439	19	36
,, 19th .	70	450	24	26
,, 26th .	36	456	34	44

"The numbers of unindentured people at work, Coolies, Chinese, Portuguese, Creoles, Barbadians, &c., including mechanics, porters, &c., *in fact, all classes*—

August 5th	756
,, ...	764
,, ...	780
,, ...	759

(The totals, therefore, at work would be 1,282, 1,279, 1,300, 1,251.)

"The wages paid in the month of August were $8,014.61, or equal to £1,669 1*s.* 2*d.* Of this sum the immigrants received about $2,400, or say £500. You are aware that extensive works were going on at the buildings, so that mechanics, such as carpenters, engineers, and masons, were drawing large sums weekly, and in this way the Coolies appear to earn less. I find, however, that Mr. Russell's evidence as to the rough estimate of Coolie earnings is about what we do at Schoon Ord. On the week 29th October of the present year (1870) the earnings amounted to $590.18. This sum divided by 570 would give an average of $1.04, or 4*s.* 4*d.* per week, which divided by 6 days would be 17 cents per day for every soul on the estate, so that my people are doing well. Mr. Russell says he usually divides the total earnings of the Coolies by the total number of souls, and this by the number of working days. If they only earn 10 cents they are doing badly; if 12 cents they are doing middling; if 14 cents they are doing fairly; if over that they are doing well."*

My correspondent apportions the earnings thus:—

($590.18 earned in one week by 515 indentured immigrants.)

210 men averaging $1.50 per week		$315
137 ,, 1.20 ,, ...		164.40
29 in hospital, *nil.*		
12 absent on leave or deserting, *nil.*		
388 men.	Carried forward . .	479.40

I paid my next visit to the handsome properties of Montrose, Better Hope, and Vryheid's Lust, respecting which I need only add a few notes. In these the resident attorney is employing his great agricultural skill in improving the method of cultivation by subsoil drainage and steam-ploughing. Bricks and pipes are manufactured and burned on the estate. As we turned up the middle dam of Montrose, the large wet fields on either side, grass-grown and partly overrun with low bush, seemed alive with cattle. These lands had been invaded by the sea, and were unfit for canes, so that the proprietors permitted the Coolies to pasture their cows upon them. Many of them were valuable, and in fine condition. The immigrants will pay eighty or a hundred dollars for a cow, and tend it with the utmost care. I have seen an Indian woman diligently picking out the *ticks* from the animal's hair with one hand, while she softly smoothed the skin with the other. The steam-ploughing is done by an engine stationed in a punt, getting its fulcrum from the bank of the canal on which it floats. At the other end of the field to be ploughed is a movable anchor,

Brought forward	479.40
70 women averaging $1	70
34 ,, $0.72	24.48
6 in hospital, *nil.*	
8 nursing and missing, *nil.*	
118 women.	
36 girls and children about buildings, total .	16.30
28 infants, *nil.*	
	$590.18

with a steel pulley, in which works a wire rope. This rope winds over a drum in the punt, and to it is attached a powerful plough. As the rope is wound upon the drum, it pulls the shear through the stiff clay soil with resistless force. A clever Negro alternately held the stilts, or rode on one to balance the machine, occasionally, at an obstacle, getting a "cropper," which seemed to give him no trouble.

As we drove along the coast from Better Hope, we passed a huge village. It consists of a number of freehold sheds built by Negroes and free Coolies—miserable places enough some of them. . Here are four thousand inhabitants, yet not half-a-dozen work on the adjacent plantations. They either go five or six miles up the coast to show their independence of the neighbouring managers, or do not work at all: plantains and bread-fruit grow at the back of the village with little trouble. They love to fish in the morning, and lie with full stomachs watching the slow wings of Time. There is an Anglican church here, the rector of which tries hard to wake the people from their apathy. Not long since, he succeeded in getting a draining-engine erected to keep the village free from water. The koker, or sluice-board, on the shore gave way, and the water, breaking through the bank, soon surrounded the houses. Mr. McG. told me that he went down on the morning after the occurrence, and found a couple of hundred blacks, who had been turned out of their houses by the flood, sitting on the bank eyeing the inundation.

"What you sit there for? Get up, and go into the trench and bank it up."

"Oh, massa, who pay us for doing it? Want dollar a day for work like dat."

They were unwilling to purchase the luxury of safety without the additional incentive of wages. The condition and characteristics of these people set before one a problem almost as terrible and quite as insoluble as that of the Irish peasant.

CHAPTER VI.

GOVERNMENT, GOVERNORS, AND GOVERNING CLASSES.

MR. TROLLOPE'S description of the government of British Guiana as a mild despotism tempered by sugar, would be more correct if altered to—a mild despotism of sugar. Sugar is the ambition, means, and end of nearly everything done in the colony. It gives aim to the energy of the trader, animates the talent of the lawyer, prompts the research and skill of the doctor, and sweetens the tongues as well as the palates of the clergy. Little else is cultivated for exportation. Cotton and cacao have, if any, only a miserable footing. There are plantain-grounds and cattle-farms (some of the latter very extensive), a few coffee and cocoa-nut plantations, and a considerable quantity of timber is exported; but most of the wealth and business of the country is concentrated in the one hundred and fifty-three sugar plantations. In the flourishing slavery times British Guiana produced large quantities of cotton and coffee. The return, in 1820, of cotton was 4,536,741 lbs., and of coffee 8,673,120 lbs. Of cacao

the same year there were 113,956 lbs. In the apprenticeship years 1835—1838 more than a hundred million pounds of sugar were produced; last year (1870) the exports of the colony were—

Sugar	94,944 hhds.
Rum	20,716 puncheons.
Molasses	17,606 casks.
Timber	153,127 cubic feet.
Cotton	103 bales.
Shingles	6,221,225
Cocoa-nuts	28,062*

From this it will be seen that sugar is the
lizing interest, and necessarily occupies nearly all the estates.

The plantations are owned and managed almost entirely by Europeans, and chiefly by men of British origin. In 1861 the population of British Guiana was 155,917, of whom 1,482 were natives of Europe and 147 of North America. Although there are influential Creole Europeans, I cannot be far wrong in saying that in the hands of a small proportion of these 1,629 people, or their equivalent in 1870, are centred the real power and wealth of the colony. Taking the one hundred and fifty sugar plantations, we may soon trace to a certainty the number of persons in whom that power resides.† There are many absentee

* Report of the Commissioners, &c., ¶ 938—941.

† The Commissioners say in their Report, ¶ 269—70: "There are in British Guiana at present 153 sugar estates, according to the Directory of 1870, more or less under cultivation. Unions of two or more of these, under one management, and with one set of machinery and buildings, where adjacent estates have come into the possession of the same proprietors, have reduced the number practically to 136. Of these about 20

proprietors, British and Dutch. For them persons act in the colony, overlooking and supplying the

are only very partially cultivated, and two or three have but quite recently resumed into cultivation. Upon 123 sugar estates are there indentured immigrants; and also upon one plantain estate, making 124 in all; and there are besides a few of the half-abandoned estates which are partially worked with free Coolies.

"About one-tenth only of the whole, that is to say, 14 or 15, have the proprietor or part proprietor residing on them and managing them. 85 are entirely owned by proprietors not resident in the colony; the remaining 35 or 36 are, at least partially, owned by colonists who are either merchants, estate attorneys, or, in some cases, managers of other estates. Among the non-resident proprietors the largest holder is the Colonial Company, with nine large estates; Messrs. Daniells, of Bristol, also own 9; and Messrs. James Ewing and Co., Messrs. Sandbach, Parker, and Co., Messrs. Bosanquet, Curtis, and Co., and other West Indian houses, either by themselves or their partners individually, hold a large portion of the remainder. Perhaps 40 out of the 85 estates, owned entirely out of the colony, are in the hands of such merchants, and these include nearly all the largest, finest, and best cultivated of the whole.

"The extent to which these same houses hold mortgages upon the remaining estates cannot of course be guessed; but the tendency of estates in general is evidently to fall into their hands; and for reasons hereafter to be explained, this process is likely for the present to continue. The resident proprietors have, moreover, all purchased, not inherited, their estates; and since there does not seem to be any strong feeling even among English owners in favour of treating a sugar estate as a family property, by devising it to a single heir, a thing, moreover, which could not be effected under the Dutch colonial law, except by an application of the doctrine of election; and since a sugar estate will never bear partition, the death of the proprietor is often followed by a sale.

"In this way most of the old families have disappeared which were formerly associated with this place. Only one estate remains in the possession of a Dutch gentleman, the single relic of the times before the cession; six or seven exhibit well-known English family names; but upon the whole the aspect and future of the tenure of land throughout the colony is not territorial, aristocratic, patriarchal, or feudal, but simply and exclusively commercial; whatever elements of natural or artificial beauty, whatever traces of refined leisure may formerly have surrounded the planters' houses, have vanished; even the tropical luxury for which it was so famous has, to a great extent, disappeared; and in its place utility, economy, and the latest appliances of scientific farming and manufacture now constitute the chief feature of a thriving sugar estate."

estates. These persons are called attorneys. To live upon, direct, and cultivate each estate, a manager is appointed, acting in some cases also as the attorney. Under him are generally from five to eight overseers, who were formerly for the most part coloured people selected in the colony, but are now principally brought from England or Scotland. Under the overseers are black or Coolie "drivers," to take charge of the gangs. We see at once that, allowing the utmost margin, the total of attorneys, managers, and overseers of estates will not be great, and the number of those of British extraction will be even more limited. On looking over the list, it appears that about 240 firms and individuals are either owners, attorneys, or managers of all the estates in the colony. Of the estates, 106 or thereabouts are under the care of 35 attorneys. Some of the attorneys have an enormous responsibility. I find, for instance—

Mr. James Stuart, attorney or co-attorney of			. .	13 estates.
Mr. McCalman "Colonial Co."	,,	,, of	. .	21 ,,
Mr. Garnett	,,	,, of	. .	21 ,,
Mr. Russell—				

—but Mr. Russell shall describe himself on oath.

Question by the Commissioners: You are the manager of Leonora, with other adjoining estates?

A. I do not know whether you can call me manager. I have charge of those estates, but I have managers under me with full salaries.

Q. You are also attorney for several estates, are you not?

A. I am.

Q. Do you consider yourself as attorney for Leonora?

A. I am.

Q. What are the duties of attorneys?

A. The duties of an attorney are to pay periodical visits to the estates, to inspect the cultivation and manufacturing departments, and in town to examine all the weekly reports coming in from the estates.

Q. Does the attorney appoint the officers on the estates?

A. He appoints the manager, but generally the manager appoints his own overseers. I may mention that on the Colonial Company's estates a great many young men are sent out indentured from home, and they are placed on the estates either by myself or by my co-attorneys.

Q. You are one of the attorneys for the Colonial Company's estates?

A. I am.

Q. What are the estates for which you are attorney?

A. Well, to begin with, Hampton Court, on the Arabian coast. I am at present also acting for Anna Regina as planting attorney. I then come across to the west coast, where I am attorney and part proprietor of Plantation Tuschen de Vrienden. The next estate on the west coast of which I am attorney is Plantation De Willem; then Zeeburg, Leonora, and Anna Catherina. They are combined in one estate. You may call it one very large estate, making

about 3,000 hogsheads of sugar, where my residence is. I have two managers, and each receives a salary of 2,000 dollars per year to conduct the field work and manufacturing department.

Q. Are these all?

A. The next estate is Windsor Forest, on the same coast, and Haarlem. These two estates join each other; you may almost call them one; they soon will be one combined estate. We then go up the river to Plantation Farm and Peter's Hall, on the east bank of Demerara river; then to Plantation Success, on the east coast, and La Bonne Intention; of that estate also I am part proprietor. That embraces my duties in Demerara and Essequibo. I pay two half-yearly visits, and oftener if I can find time, to the Colonial Company's estate in Berbice, which consists of Plantations Friends, Mara and Ma Retraite, on the Berbice river, and Plantation Albion, on the Corentyn coast. I also inspect a mortgaged estate, Goldstone Hall, on the Canje Creek, and I have paid one visit to an estate which is slightly indebted to the agency of the company here, called Waterloo, in Leguan. Those are all.

Q. How long have you been in the country?

A. I have been in active service here ever since 1847, with the exception of a visit of six months which I paid to my native country in 1865, two months in 1868, and two months in 1869, when I travelled through the West Indian Islands.

Q. All that time you have been employed upon estates?

A. Yes, I commenced my career on Plantation Friends, on the Berbice river; and from there I went to Plantation Diamond, on the Demerara river.

Q. As what?

A. As an overseer. I commenced as an overseer, that is to say, I commenced my career here as an overseer. I had done something before I came here.

Q. And from that you have risen to the important situations you now hold?

A. Yes, if they may be considered so.

One of the ablest men in the colony, Mr. Russell's talent and energy have made him a very sugar-king.

It appears that there are, in round numbers, about one hundred managers who are not proprietors, and about thirty-six proprietors who are neither managers nor attorneys. At the extreme I take it, then, that $35 + 100 + 25 = 160$ people and firms on the spot may be said practically—though there are some wealthy men of business not bound up with sugar—to have the interests of the colony in their own hands, to be the main employers of labour, the main patrons of the professions; and that of these the thirty-five attorneys and a few proprietors constitute a kind of local aristocracy, with the monopoly of social and political power.

To this state of things an important balance theoretically exists in the peculiar form of the government. The Governor, as her Majesty's representative, is the embodiment of executive power. The legislature, called the Court of Policy, consists of ten persons. Five are government officials, namely,

the Governor, the Attorney-General, the Government Secretary, the Receiver-General, and the Auditor-General. To procure the other five, resort is had to a College of Electors. This is a relic of Dutch times, the College of "Keysers," and consists of seven persons elected *for life* by a constituency qualified by property. This qualification is an annual income of £125. Persons of every nationality and pursuit are included in the constituency. The total number of voters in 1865 was 907. Upon a vacancy in the legislature, the College of Electors send up two names to that court, which thereupon selects one to fill the post. The Court of Policy sits sometimes publicly, but may and does hold secret sessions.

Is it possible for one gravely to criticise such a legislature as this—governing 155,000 persons? It takes one's liberal breath away! Even the limited cream of popular representation is filtered through that colander with seven holes, the College of Electors for life!

Theoretically, I say, the Executive has a heavy balance against the five elected members in its influence over its own nominees, the official members. But of these some may—as I conceive, most improperly—be attorneys or planters, as is the case with the present Auditor-General. Without any imputation that the power thus concentrated into the hands of one interest is actually abused, an impartial spectator is apt to conclude that a legislature so framed will be a subject of much suspicion. This, although men, not of the planting interest, have been

and are members of the legislature. The least possible reflection against it is a very strong one, namely, that in the main it will only represent and discuss one side of all public questions. Its most well-meant paternal kindnesses may be misapprehended by the objects of them. Thus I found in Demerara evidences of a strong under-current against the planting influence. Persons of all classes, professions, and hues, when they could speak to me confidentially, expressed a dissatisfied feeling about the relative strength of the sugar party and the popular element. In the case of the Portuguese, numbering some 25,000, and the aboriginal Indians, this took the form of strong representations to be presented to the Home Government upon the injustice of the legislation and the imperfect administration of the laws.

This brings me to an important question already foreshadowed. The counter-check to the dominance of sugar on behalf of all other interests—including that of the Coolie—is the Governor. His responsibility is enormous. He is a modified little autocrat in power—if he chooses or dares to use it. If he does not use it, he may be simply a tool. If he abuses it, he is a dangerous weapon. Probably the same may to some degree be said of most of our West Indian colonies. At all events, in British Guiana the quality of the Executive is a matter of immense moment, as well to the energetic and wealthy planters as to the vast community of powerless and unrepresented races. Hence the responsibility thrown on the Home Colonial

Minister of selecting her Majesty's representative is very grave. A Governor ought to be a man of ripe experience, of high social and intellectual position, and of very firm character. He should be strong enough to have the full confidence of the Colonial Office, and to hold his own against a whole community on any point of policy, while sufficiently liberal and genial in his tastes to assume the leadership of society. A man who does this will more than any other be appreciated even by the planters themselves. The post in British Guiana is a good one. The salary is £5,000 sterling a year, with perquisites, and a very handsome sum for "entertainments." Are there no talented peers, no junior statesmen, no retired judges, no experienced and able military officers, willing to accept such a position for five years?—and why should such important governments as some of those in the West Indies be confided to political adventurers or dried officials? The British Guianians, as one of the richest and most enterprising communities attached to the Crown, are entitled to ask this question, and to have a specific reply. How, for instance, came Mr. Francis Hincks, a Canadian politician, of whose political career it were better not to venture on a retrospect, to be appointed Governor of Barbadoes, and then of British Guiana? An able, astute, scheming, uncompromising, terribly energetic Scotch-Irishman, from the dangerous neighbourhood of Belfast, endued with semi-absolute power, and incontinently pitched into a community like that of British Guiana, could scarcely fail to produce a pyrotechnic com-

motion, in the blaze and sparkle of which fingers would be burned, and perhaps some persons totally annihilated. Again, what a commentary on the past administration of colonial affairs is the fact that in one case an appointment to the post of Governor was made by a pure mistake of the noble Duke then Secretary of State for the Colonies! The interest of these colonies, and of the empire, demands that more serious attention should be given to the quality of their Governors. It is an insult to them, as it is a wrong to ourselves, to burthen them with the expense of an inefficient Executive. I carefully guard myself from being supposed to reflect on appointments to our greater colonies.

How much springs from ignorant or indifferent administration of our colonial affairs! What blunders, what misunderstandings, what bitterness, what wrongs have disturbed nearly every colony of the British Crown under our present system! Even in Georgetown I heard the threat from a high official that the United States would be their refuge from the impolicy —not of Britain and her people, their hearts are true I would fain believe—but of our administrators.

A striking instance of legislative pliability is included in the Report of the Commissioners:*—"An odd clause in a recent ordinance attracted our notice, to the effect that any charge under the Immigration Ordinances might be laid before any stipendiary justice of the peace in the colony. That is to say, apparently, if a manager objected to

* ¶ 225, p. 67.

have his cause tried by any particular magistrate, he might carry his immigrant elsewhere. After this provision had a good deal perplexed us, and caused us to ask questions of the magistrates as to its working, without finding that it was ever put in practice, its history was volunteered by the Solicitor-General. It seems to have been a piece of hand-to-mouth legislation. An influential manager had happened to lay his charge against a deserter in the wrong court, and was cast accordingly. A clause was thereupon in hot haste stuck (*sic!*) into the Immigration Ordinance then before the legislature, to guard suitors against the effects of their own carelessness, by the help of a device which might have worked the most intolerable oppressions. Even within the limits of a magistrate's regular work great hardship may be inflicted upon the labouring man, by postponements or adjournments, if he has to come far; but to carry the case against him into another district would be nothing short of tyranny. We are given to understand that the clause has never been acted on, and earnestly hope it never may be."

The Commissioners have failed to animadvert on the state of official morality in the society where such an incident could occur. The accident of a disappointment to an "influential" manager in pursuing his ordinary remedy in a court of justice leads to the *sticking* in hot haste "into an ordinance," then passing the legislature, of a clause, devoid of justice and capable of working "intolerable oppressions." This must as a matter of course have been done by con-

cert in the Court of Policy. The persons who did it were few in number, but they must have embraced some at least of the government officials in the legislature. The Governor of the day cannot exonerate himself from at least inadvertence in permitting legislation to proceed on so light and one-sided a pretext. And, one may well ask, Where was the Attorney-General, bound to look equally after the interests of all classes as her Majesty's servant, and the proper person to intervene to prevent such a legislative scandal?

In alluding hereafter to the office of Immigration Agent-General, I shall have occasion to show how a former Governor assumed the power to make an order which virtually repealed a proviso in an existing ordinance. By a stroke of his pen he thus seriously modified the functions of a high official, and altered the relations of the whole immigrant class to the courts of justice. Had this order been of an opposite character, there can be little doubt that it would not long have stood; but as it ran current with the wishes of the governing class, it seems to have met with no protest except from the individual chiefly concerned. These cases are indicative of the effects of a preponderating influence unchecked by a firm Executive. Not one of them could have occurred had the Governor taken a firm stand against them. The shrewdest of the planter class themselves would admit that a continuance or extension of such anomalous proceedings would in the end lead to evils as injurious to themselves as they are now injurious

to others, and it was no small satisfaction to me to hear some of them expressing a strong desire that the head of the Executive should be a man of great nerve and firmness. In some cases that firmness is as much needed against the Colonial Office as on its behalf.

One other peculiarity of the British Guianian Government remains to be noticed. In all financial matters the Court of Policy is assisted by a College of Financial Representatives, numbering six, elected in the same way as the Keysers,* and holding office for two years. Thus the Combined Court, consisting of sixteen members, has the important control of the revenue and taxation. The Financial Court being so constituted, we turn with some curiosity to ascertain how the revenue is raised. The question is the more vital because the expense of immigration lies not alone on the planters, but is shared by the whole community. Of the cost of the system, roughly speaking, one-third is paid by the government, and two-thirds by the planter, in proportion to the number of his indentures. That one-third, however, does not represent the whole charge upon the community. The salary of the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, the cost of district gaols expressly erected and maintained for Coolies, and a considerable proportion of the police expenses, must in fairness be attributed to immigration. According to the Commissioners these items alone amount since 1859 to $65,985, the dollar being 4*s.* 2*d.*

* I have already stated that the total number of electors in the colony in 1865 was 907. (Bennett's Guiana, p. 7.)

The ground on which the general community is asked to contribute to these expenses is that it is every way benefited by the results of the importation of labour. Yet a lazy Negro who lived contentedly under his own pumpkin-vine and papau-tree might well question his interest in the introduction of these formidable competitors.

To the subordinate community generally, the taxation most important is, of course, that of food. How is food taxed in British Guiana? I take my answer from the tariff.

	s.	*d.*	
Bread, biscuit, &c., per 100 lbs.	2	1	stg.
Cornmeal and oatmeal	1	0½	,,
Dried fish	2	1	,,
Wheat flour, per barrel (196 lbs.)	4	2	,,
Rice, per 100 lbs.	1	0½	,,
Pork, per brl. 200 lbs.	12	6	,,

This is a direct and heavy impost on the food consumers. It is due to truth to say that these are little, if at all, above the duties on the same articles in other West Indian colonies.* What of the planters' importations?

* From prices current kindly forwarded to me by Mr. Barr, the duties in December, 1870, in different places appear as follows:—

	Flour. per bushel.	Fish. per 100 lbs.	Rice. per 100 lbs.	Pork. per barrel.
Jamaica .	8.0	3.6	3.0	15.0
Barbadoes	3.6	0.2	0.5	8.4
Trinidad .	5.0	1.0	2.0	8.4
Demerara .	4.2	2.1	2.1	12.6

It has also been pointed out to me that on the principle of *ad valorem* duty, the planter pays relatively as high as the ordinary consumer. "A barrel of flour in Baltimore is worth $6—duty $1, or 16 per cent. on cost. A ton of coal costs $6.6—duty 1*s.* 6*d.*, or 22 per cent. Contents of a puncheon of lime is value for 7*s.*—duty 1*s.* 1½*d.*, or 15 per cent." These

	s.	*d.*	
Coals, per hogshead	1	0	stg.
,, ton	1	6	,,
Lime, per pun.	1	0½	,,

Sugar exported pays no duty; and the following things are exempt from taxation:—

Machinery employed in mining or in the manufacture of raw materials of the colony.
Manures.
Steam draining engines and steam ploughs.

The Combined Court exercises a power over the salaries of officials, which for the colony in its present condition appears to need in some instances a modification. Some at least of the latter, especially those appointed from England, should be assured an inflexible salary by the Colonial Minister. It is evidently unfair that work to be done by persons representing the authority of the Home Government, as well as engaged in the interests of the colony, should be exposed to the vacillating antipathies or partialities of the local powers. To this must be added the fact that the possibility of such a danger may affect the balance even of an independent mind.

I have spoken with great freedom on the constitution and society of British Guiana as it appeared to my wondering eyes; in duty bound nothing to extenuate, as by gratitude urged to set down naught in malice. It is plain that in the colony itself there are many men of liberal opinions who would be glad to assist

must be very favourable purchases, however, for the planter, and cannot be accepted as an average of value. And whatever may be said as to the *ad valorem* duties, the unequal incidence of the weight of taxation is plain enough.

in freeing their political constitution, could they see their way to placing any confidence in the Creole Africans. The failure of the experiment of free government in Jamaica is a signal instance in favour of continuing the present constitution; but there are differences in the conditions of the two colonies, which need to be taken into account. British Guiana is wealthier, more full of energy, and perhaps of intelligence. It ought to be able to show considerable progress in the education of the blacks. Moreover, it has a great community of Portuguese now permanently absorbed in it. These people are in the anomalous position of foreign subjects, and, with very rare exceptions, have no representation even in the constituency. Yet they seem to be well qualified to take some part in the government; and, indeed, declare themselves at present to be suffering from the effects of class legislation. It would be well if by some arrangement these admirable citizens —or some portion of them—now constituting, as they do, ninety per cent. of the shopkeeping community, could be brought within the privileges of British-Guianian free-citizenship, and be called upon to share its burthens. They would constitute a compact body of conservative defence against any tendencies to outbreak among the labouring classes, while, on the other hand, their numbers and property would form a barrier to the unconscious or attempted domination of a higher class. This, I venture to suggest, with a limited addition of blacks or coloured people to the constituency,—whose qualifications might be

required to be both of property and education,—while establishing society on a broader, would also place it on a safer basis. Class and race jealousies, sure to arise in such circumstances as those now existing, would be removed, and the educational effect on the people themselves would be of the highest value. At all events, it is clear that some power must be erected in the colony to cope with the preponderating force of the planters, the possession of which is an insensible yet powerful temptation to them. In offering these criticisms I am not writing *against them*, but in the general interest of colonial well-being and good government.

CHAPTER VII.

ESTATES' MANAGEMENT, STAFF AND EXPENSES.

I HAVE referred to the manner in which the sugar estates of British Guiana are owned—some by resident proprietors, others by absentees. The absentees are represented by local agents, named attorneys, who are generally not only the guardians of the estate's progress, but also its principal merchants both ways—selling its produce and providing its supplies. Moreover, they are not infrequently the mortgagees.*

The attorney holds the proxies for his proprietor, and votes on his behalf in the various elections. Hence the deductions in the preceding chapter as to the governing class are not without great significance to the Coolie and every other class in the colony. For —omitting for the present the professions—to these attorneys the next class of the community is wholly subject; that is, the class of estate managers. Every plantation has its manager—a man with grave responsibilities, as he must of necessity, for the interest

* Report of the Commissioners, ¶ 270. Ante, note, pp. 71, 72.

of his employer, be a man of varied abilities and experience. The Commissioners have admirably summed up the duties of this office.* "He is of course a practical planter, whether he first came out under indenture from Scotland as an overseer, or migrated to better himself from Barbadoes, or arrived in the colony from some other port, to seek his living, rather than to make his fortune: he has spent all his life since among the sugar-canes. He is not merely a scientific farmer on a large scale, in a country where farming has inherited from its Dutch founders the necessity and benefits of a vast system of water engineering, and where the advantages of a tropical climate and fertility are almost counterbalanced by the tropical violence of the elements; he must not only have in common with other large producers a sufficient knowledge of trade to be able to watch prices and appreciate the views of market; but he is a manufacturer as well, with a singularly beautiful and delicate process to conduct, and with machinery worked by from one to half-a-dozen steam engines to control. Among British possessions the colony of Guiana produces the largest proportion of the celebrated vacuum-pan sugar; and all the estates in the colony, whose proprietors can muster or borrow the money, are, since the last modification of the sugar duties in England, fast ordering out vacuum-pans, and converting their machinery. Not but what the old-fashioned common-process sugar-making alike required care and extraordinary assiduity in the manu-

* Report, ¶ 271, 272.

facturer—that is, the manager—who has to get delicate operations of boiling, tempering, and clarifying accurately performed by half-skilled workmen of heterogeneous races, where one mistake may prove fatal to the whole. The peculiar characteristic of the sugar industry, which has hitherto prevented the separation of manufacture from agriculture—namely, that the canes must be crushed when cut, and the liquor boiled upon the spot, or at least without a day's unnecessary delay—adds enormously to his difficulties. All the parts of his machinery—the cane-crusher, the clarifiers, the copper wall, and the centrifugals—must work evenly together, or time, which is money, will be wasted, the fuel consumed; the dried 'megass,' or the refuse of the squeezed canes, must be protected from the weather—that is, from the rains of Demerara—and stored in sufficient quantity for the furnaces. A single break-down of the machinery may destroy the returns of much labour and expenditure; a single misunderstanding with the labourers may make the whole profit of a month's labour vanish on the spot.

"When to this is added the task of controlling, humouring, and acting earthly providence to some hundreds of labourers of different races, of different kinds and degrees of civilisation—the Creole task-gang, independent, punctilious, contracting on equal terms, as much for the sale of their labour as for the earning of wages; the Chinese, silent, observant, and capricious, ready to hang himself or desert at a moment's notice for reasons inappreciable to a

European; the Coolie, indolent to a fault, though generally amenable, with terrible drawbacks of revengefulness and untruthfulness—and when the business of an estate has to be carried on somehow, as is too often the case, with but a scanty margin of annual profit for mistakes, between a chronic complaint to the Immigration Office of insufficient wages on the one hand, and a peremptory order of retrenchment from the attorney on the other, it will become evident that two conclusions at least must be drawn as to managers by those who would gain a correct idea of the position of their indentured labourers. First, they cannot possibly, as a class, or in any numbers, be either stupid or resourceless in difficulties, or indifferent to suffering, or malevolent, or cruel; secondly, the welfare of the Asiatic immigrants bound over to service to an employer in such a position, weighed down with such difficulties and responsibilities, ought not to be intrusted without supervision to his sole sagacity and care."

Unfinished as is the style in which these paragraphs are embodied, they contain as much significant matter as may be found in twice the space in any other part of the Report. How much of all this question hangs upon the pivot of the managers' temper, character, and conduct, only those who have surveyed the field with their own eyes can appreciate. The manager is the person with whom the Coolie has directly to do. I have heard of instances in which immigrants have appealed to the attorney; but they are rare. The manager prosecutes, and in the

very few cases in which Coolies are plaintiffs he is defendant; yet, in dealing with estates, or with points arising out of the immigration ordinances, the Executive appear to recognise a divided responsibility, and to resort sometimes to the manager and sometimes to the attorney. In one or two instances, on large estates, the manager has a deputy-manager under him, but generally the next person to a manager on the staff of the estate is the overseer. The overseer directly superintends certain "gangs" in field or building work. He has to be early on horseback, laying out his hands upon his portion of the estate, and through the day he overlooks the weeding, planting, digging, takes account in his field-book of the people at work, noting whether they are in the field or absent, with the amount of money they earn in the day; and in the evening ascertains from the hospital book whether any of his gang have the excuse of sickness for absence from work. His book then presents a record of the day's labour, which, after examination and certification by the manager, is transferred to the "pay-list" and signed by him. From this document, also called the *muster-roll book*, is taken the evidence of wages due, as well as the proof in the magistrate's court of the absence or presence of the immigrant on any given day.* Six or eight overseers may be found on an estate. In former times they were principally coloured persons, but the partiality for young Englishmen or Scotchmen

* A beautiful instance of the manufacture of evidence by an amateur legislative hand!

is increasing. When once they are acclimatised they are not only more trustworthy but more vigorous than the Créoles. I saw many of these young men apparently suffering from the tremendous exposure and the abominable climate, but others seemed to endure the long hours in the hot sun without inconvenience.

Under the overseers are foremen (or, more correctly, *drivers*, for I had an idea that the former term was a clever euphemism invented by Mr. Russell for the benefit of the Commissioners. I never heard the word used except in his evidence), who are the immediate supervisors of each gang. They watch the work, take note of its quality, and probably keep the labourers up to duty. They are always of the Black, or Coolie, or Chinese race, and their relations to the labourers give rise to the greatest of the difficulties that occur on estates. The Blacks are inclined to selfishness, domineering, cheating, and favouritism; they are naturally prejudiced against the Coolie, as an interloper of another and physically weaker race. They are not governed by principle. Their greed or their passion may lead them—and often does lead them—to perpetrate criminal injustice in the pursuit of it. Hence these are the persons on the estate's staff which need the firmest restraint and watchfulness on the part of managers and overseers.

For the buildings is required an engineer, generally a Scotchman or an Englishman, though one of the ablest engineers in the colony is a coloured gentleman. He may have the machinery of two or three

estates under his care, and is generally equal to any emergency arising out of the accidents liable to occur to the complicated and beautiful machinery used in the vacuum-pan process. Very clever sub-engineers are found among the Blacks and Chinese. To these we must add the book-keeper and the hospital staff, consisting of the doctor, head sick-nurse, under-nurses, and cook.

We may now turn to the constitution of the estate forces. The number of labourers on single estates varies from one or two hundred up to a thousand. At *Leonora* the total number of immigrants was 683. Perhaps one-third, or even half as many more, of the Creole blacks work on such an estate, but not doing on the average more than three days' work a week. The available forces will be marshalled in gangs for the various objects of the work. The strongest will form the "shovel gang," or "cane-cutting gang" in crop time; the less able will constitute the "weeding gang;" there will be also a "building gang;" and these gangs again will be subdivided, for ease of management and purposes of calculation, into the "Creole gangs," the "Coolie gangs," the "light gang" of weakly men, women, and children, who may be seen working in the megass yard. In the buildings will be found from 90 to 150 at work; the rest are distributed over the fields, if not in the hospital or skulking.

Such is the constitution of an estate's staff, and of its labour force. I have already described the nature of the work to be performed by this great community,

which lives by itself, is shut in with itself, must find its news and its amusement, as well as its tasks, out of itself. Take a large factory in Manchester, or Birmingham, or Belfast, build a wall round it, shut in its workpeople from all intercourse, save at rare intervals, with the outside world, keep them in absolute heathen ignorance, and get all the work you can out of them, treat them not unkindly, leave their social habits and relations to themselves, as matters not concerning you who make the money from their labour, and you would have constituted a little community resembling, in no small degree, a sugar-estate village in British Guiana.

I should now give an idea of the enterprise and cost contributed by the planter to the vast manufacturing venture implied by all I have described. It is needful to remind ourselves of this that we may be the more cautious against doing him any injustice in considering the system on which his fortune depends. One of the friends who, during my sojourn in the colony, treated me with the most generous and unvarying kindness, though himself a great planter and deeply concerned in the immigration of Coolies, showed me the books of a fine estate which was being rapidly worked up to the producing standard; and also furnished me with an abstract from them, with permission to use it as I deemed fit. I cannot do better justice to the position of the planters, nor could I find a neater expression of their views, than is contained in a letter which my friend wrote in sending me these notes.

"According to promise, I now send you extracts from the books of plantation . . . . showing the working account of that estate for six years ending Dec. 31, 1869; also a memorandum of what I expect the result will turn out for the present year.

"You will observe that the amount of money sunk has been considerable. At the same time I cannot exactly call it a 'Loss,' as the estate has been materially improved during the period; but I think that the figures show that 'Labour' has had its full share (if not much over) the value of the products of the soil. You will also notice that as the estate expanded the amount of money expended under this head materially increased, having risen from $17,485.03 in 1864 to $45,328.68 in 1869.

"The sheet contains a memorandum of acres of cane cut each year, and the quantity of sugar, &c., made; and the result over the series of years shows a return which I do not think can be exceeded in the colony. And when I also bring to your notice that the estate has been under the control of a planter of high reputation, who resides in the immediate neighbourhood, and is directly interested in the results, I think that bad management can scarcely be given as the reason that so far no revenue has accrued.

"The figures show what an expenditure of capital is required to develop a sugar estate, even to a moderate extent, as . . . . is comparatively only a small estate.

"The probable results for 1870 will likely give some return for the outlay, but I may note that they are based

on the sugar bringing present value, and this is high rather than otherwise, and a fall of one penny or half-penny per lb. (which is quite on the cards) would give a very different result from what I anticipate, which would lessen the value of the crop some $13,000, and instead of a profit would again leave a considerable loss.

"You will notice that the acreage cut in 1864 was 190 acres, and we expect to reap 377 acres for the present crop; and when I mention that 1,200 acres of land are available, I think that you will agree with me that with so much in hand there is not any fear that any increase in our working population would act detrimentally to the interest of the labourers now in the colony, or rather in the neighbourhood of this particular property; and I may name that most estates in this and other districts are very similarly situated.

"The information given is at your service, and I hope may be useful."

By the account thus kindly furnished it appears that, beginning at the first year, 1864, the expense account and produce account were relatively as follows:—

1864.

Expenses.		Produce.	
Immigration dues . .	$2,948.62	Acres cut, 190.	
Salaries, supplies, fuel, hospital, &c. . . .	16,737.97	Crop—373 hhds. sugar, 242 casks molasses .	$30,279.08
Labour Account . .	17,485.03	Loss for 1864	9,531.99
Interest	2,639.45		
	$39,811.07		$39,811.07

1865.

Immigration dues . .	$2,744.66	Acres cut, 232.	
Salaries, &c.	27,987.99	Crop—546 hhds. sugar,	
LABOUR ACCOUNT . .	19,873.96	42 brls. do., 59 puns.	
Interest	2,972.14	rum, 294 casks molasses	$50,366.59
		Loss for 1865	3,212 16
	$53,578.75		$53,578.75

1866.

Immigration dues . .	$3,300.83	Acres cut, 296.	
Salaries, &c.	38,575.84	Crop—495 hhds. sugar,	
LABOUR ACCOUNT . .	21,189.13	7 brls. do., 81 puns.	
Interest	3,090.91	rum, 253 casks molasses	$44,484.26
		Loss for 1866	21,702.45
	$66,186.71		$66,186.71

1867.

Immigration dues . .	$3,177.79	Acres cut, 226.	
Salaries, &c.	22,649.07	Crop—520 hhds. sugar,	
LABOUR ACCOUNT . .	22,861.99	166 puns. rum, 356	
Interest	3,694.99	casks molasses . . .	$48,368.80
		Loss for 1867	4,015.04
	$52,383.84		$52,383.84

1868.

Immigration dues . .	$3,038.81	Acres cut, 300.	
Salaries, &c.	30,215.55	Crop—714 hhds. sugar,	
LABOUR ACCOUNT . .	33,563.01	11 tces. do., 138 puns.	
Interest	3,407.88	rum, 377 casks molasses	$71,269.04
Profit for 1868 . . .	1,043.79		
	$71,269.04		$71,269.04

1869.

Immigration dues . .	$3,926.91	Acres cut, 353.	
Salaries, &c.	55,542.15	Crop—761 hhds. sugar,	
LABOUR ACCOUNT . .	45,328.68	313 brls. do., 45 tces.	
Interest	4,063.98	melado, 69 puns. rum,	
		356 casks molasses.	
		Estimated value . .	$92,237.44
		Loss estimated for 1869	15,624.28
	$107,861.72		$107,861.72

SUMMARY.

Loss for year 1864	$9,531.99
,, 1865	3,212.16
,, 1866	21,702.45
,, 1867	4,015.04
,, 1869	15,624.28
	$54,085.92
Less profit for 1868	1,043.79
	$53,042.13 or
	£11,050 8*s.* 10*d.*

In the aggregate it will be seen that the expenses exceeded the profits during the six years by $53,042.13, or £11,050 8*s.* 10*d.*; and a fair idea may be formed of the amount of capital that must be sunk, and the time that must elapse, even under favourable circumstances, before the capitalist begins to get any returns. My correspondent points out that his hope of profits depends on the extension of the cultivation, and that again on the further supply of Coolies. No one can be surprised if the slightest hint of such a catastrophe as the stoppage of Immigration excites the apprehensions of men with so much at stake.

CHAPTER VIII.

COOLIE STRIKES AND POINTS OF LAW.

BY the steamer succeeding that in which I had reached Demerara came Mr. Des Vœux. The news of our arrival spread among the immigrants with wonderful celerity. One of the most mysterious things in the East is the rapidity with which reports are circulated, and certainly the Coolies in British Guiana managed to convey information from estate to estate with puzzling promptitude. They had previously been in an uneasy condition. Mr. Des Vœux stated that his letter to Lord Granville originated in the fear of a general rising which had been excited in his mind by the report of a riot at Leonora. This riot occurred on the 2nd of August, 1869. A dispute had arisen about three weeks previously between the manager and a gang of Coolies with reference to some unfinished work. Out of the dispute resulted a case before the magistrate, who decided against the immigrants. Upon this, after some preliminary commotion, they mutinied and beat the deputy-manager very severely. A body of police, armed with Enfield rifles, were called out to stop the disturbance. The

Coolies, however, were fool-hardy enough to face them with no other weapons than sticks and stones. In the use of the stick, a long, strengthful, and smooth piece of Hackia-wood, they are very expert, so that in the simple matter of fencing—as they far outnumbered the police—they were able to hold their ground. Providentially the commissary in charge of them did not permit his men to fire, or a massacre might have occurred with results to the colony and the immigration system both serious and far-reaching.

This *émeute* produced alarm in the European community, and general commotion among the immigrants. The Governor appealed to the officer in command of the forces at Barbadoes to be ready to assist the Executive in case of a rising. An armed addition was immediately made to the police force, under the command of the gallant Inspector-General of Police, who carries into his hot work preternatural activity, combined with a pleasant *bonhommie* which makes him a general favourite in the colony. His office is an important one, the salary amounting to £1,000 a year. I think his semi-military forces, with the exception of the officer, consisted entirely of blacks, some of whom had been privates in West India regiments. They used frequently to be turned out to parade in Georgetown streets, dressed in a neat uniform, their white puggeries framing in their ebony faces, a band of fifers preceding them; in front of that a motley collection of Negro dancers of both sexes, and at the head of

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his men, on a necessarily capacious steed, the stal wart General. As I used to watch this strange procession, and saw the fiery sun gleaming along the polished barrels of the rifles, I could not resist an uncomfortable questioning whether the system really required this sort of argument to adapt it to the reasons of those whom it chiefly concerned. But it was a satisfaction to know that the commander of the band was a man of thorough good sense, great kindliness of heart, and endued with that bravery which can afford to be cautious. Some of his commissaries appear to be of the same mettle. An incident well worth relating was told me respecting one of them. His station embraced the long jetty or stelling which runs out into the river at Pouderoyen, opposite Georgetown. He was one morning informed that two or three hundred Coolies on one of the estates had struck, and were coming down to the stelling armed with their cutlasses and sticks, intending to force a passage by the steamer to town. With four Negro policemen he waited at the stelling end, determined to prevent their crossing. The Coolies, finding their passage opposed, came on furiously, and the commissary's men began to flinch. Without arms he placed himself before his blacks, directing them to support him. He loudly warned back the approaching line, but the front ones, pressed on by those in the rear, were brought within the reach of his arm, and these he forthwith knocked down. There is a wonderful power in an Englishman's eye and voice and arm! Before that

solitary man's front these impulsive Asiatics quailed and held back; yet, advancing slowly, they forced the officer and his supporters gradually to give way to the end of the pier where the steamer was waiting. The Negroes jumped on board, and the captain called out that he had the hose ready with boiling water; but M., shouting in reply, "Let go and push off," knocked down the eager Indian next to him, laid hold of the two posts on either side the gangway to stop the rush that was immediately made, and held his own till the steamer was clear. Then he faced the disappointed Coolies, and ordered them back to the shore police-station. There he made them pile their tools, and induced them to return quietly to their estate. Such an incident, if you can get the hero for it, is worth more than a hundred riflemen and the terrible witness of dead bodies to the might of an Executive. I was told that the Coolies always afterwards held Mr. M. in high respect.

"Massa De Voo" now became the subject of rather painful and troublesome appeals. Going one day to his house, which was situated in an open field near the garrison, I found the road and garden occupied by about three hundred Indians, most of them squatting on their hams in that peculiar fashion which, if not the envy, is the wonder of Europeans. They had their hoes, shovels, and cutlasses, and were covered with the dingy marks of toil. A dispute had occurred with the manager of their estate, whereupon they had struck, and come down at once to

ask Mr. Des Vœux to help them. Accordingly the ringleaders, who could speak the strange lingo which they call English, were lining the steps of the house and occupying its gallery. Each one had his own story of some wrong or hardship, the truth of which it was impossible for us to ascertain. We could only take notes of their imperfectly-expressed complaints, either to hand to the Commissioners, or for me to use in suggesting questions for examination. If they were deceiving us, and no doubt some of them were, they did it admirably.

"O massa, plees, massa, help Coolie. Manahee too bad, massa, starve um, beat um, chuck um, *so.* Massa stop um wagee, take um wife. Coolie live too bad, massa: too hard work, too little money, too little food."

"Go tell magistrate."

"O massa, no good go mahitee. Mahitee know manahee—go manahee's house—eat um breakfas—come court—no good Coolie go court—mahitee friend manahee: always for manahee, no for Coolie."

It was a curious thing, that of the great number of Coolies whom I saw, I do not remember one who expressed the least confidence in the administration of justice. Had it not been that they came down from all parts of the colony, and evidently without any previous understanding with each other, I should have suspected this extraordinary unanimity to have been the result of conspiracy. But it was too widespread for a general arrangement to have been practicable. I did not jump from this to the conclusion

in my own mind that justice in British Guiana was not only blind, but deaf of one ear, but I was satisfied that the immigrants themselves were possessed with that notion. The opinion I thus formed has been confirmed by the Commissioners. They speak of it as an "unquestionable and most important fact that the Coolies do consider the relations of the magistrates with the managers too intimate, and have no confidence in their impartial administration of justice." I wish that the Commissioners had reflected upon this fact with more emphasis, as I shall take occasion hereafter to show they might properly have done. In looking about to account for the feeling, two or three circumstances—in themselves trivial and innocent enough—gave a clue to the reason for it. Some of the magistrates' courts are at a distance from their homes, and always near the estates from which the cases come. There are no hotels. The only decent houses are those of the managers. They are hospitable, and glad to have at table an entertaining guest. So that, as the Coolies said, the magistrate breakfasted, dined, or lunched with the man who was either the chief prosecutor or the defendant in nearly all the cases before the court. The quick minds of the Asiatics instantly fasten on this; and when they find the magistrate deciding in favour of the manager, they put down the breakfast and the decision as cause and effect. The purest administration of justice could not dissipate such a suspicion as that, nor, to be candid, afford to overlook it. And in dealing with Asiatics we must needs use some tact to disarm

Asiatic prejudices. Dr. Shier, the Medical Inspector, felt this so strongly, that he made it a rule never to accept a manager's hospitality, and travelled about British Guiana like a "casual," swinging his hammock in police-stations or chapels. The Commissioners themselves, in the course of their proceedings, when they swooped down on estates in an irregular raid, never partook of the refreshment hospitably offered them. Besides, it is not clear that preliminary consultation on a case does not occasionally take place. An instance cropped up in the evidence, and, as the witness was one of the leading planters, has a significant interest. A magistrate had come down to the manager's house before attending a court in which the cases of a large number of immigrants against that manager were to be heard. The manager, in his testimony before the Commission, said he considered the question raised by these cases so important, that he had resolved to appeal if the decision was against him. I now make a brief excerpt from his evidence, and leave the reader to form his own opinion:—

"I had also seven or eight cases against the immigrants for disobedience, which Mr. —— (the magistrate) advised *me to withdraw, and wait until the other case was reviewed. He was under the impression that Mr. Crosby* (the Immigration Agent-General) *would carry it to the Review Court; so was I, and under that impression I withdrew the charges.*" I at once suggested to the Commissioners: "Will you ask the witness where Mr. —— would give that advice—to

withdraw the charges against the Coolies? Would it be in court?" ANSWER: "*He gave it to me out of court.*" What would be thought in England of a magistrate who privately discussed the probabilities of a case on which he was about to adjudicate, with one of the parties, and gave him advice as to the course of procedure best fitted for his interest? I know it is possible such a thing may occur with our county justices; but who looks upon them as respectable law-administrators? The *naïveté* with which the witness related this incident was an evidence of the thoughtlessness on such points which was prevalent in the colony.

Our waiting batch of Coolies originated one of the most interesting inquiries before the Commission. Neither Mr. Des Vœux nor I was in a position to offer any mediation, which from us would properly have been resented by the manager. We therefore referred the Coolies to the Immigration Office. Six or seven were selected by the gang, and went to lay a formal complaint before "Crosby Office." This simple proceeding raised a grave legal question. Under the Immigrant Laws, a Coolie absenting himself from work, or found without a pass a certain distance from his plantation, was liable to a penalty, or could be arrested by any policeman. By a later ordinance an exception to these enactments was made in favour of Coolies who "had absented themselves on reasonable grounds, to complain to the Immigration Agent-General." Therefore, whenever Coolies came to Mr. Des Vœux or to me, as they

repeatedly did in large bodies, we referred them to the Immigration Office as the proper place of complaint. Then, if their complaint proved to be on reasonable grounds, it appeared by the law they ought to have been exempted from penalty for their absence. The half-dozen Coolies in the present instance went to the acting Immigration Agent-General and stated their grievance, upon which he wrote a letter to the manager of their estate certifying to the fact, and I believe stating that they were entitled to protection. A few mornings after some of them turned up at Des Vœux's in great distress. The whole embassy, if I rightly remember, had been picked out by the manager as ringleaders, and summoned to the magistrate's court for absence from work. I ought to say that the manager acted under the direction of my friend Mr. McG., the attorney of the estate, as good-hearted a Scotchman as ever lived, who gave the order under the belief that the law was with him, and on the ground that these large demonstrations were likely to imperil the peace of the colony. It was not expedient for me to appear in the local courts on behalf of the immigrants, but Mr. Des Vœux offered to provide them with a local counsel to conduct their case before the magistrate. Accordingly a Creole advocate went down to Plaisance Police Court, about seven miles from Georgetown. When I mention that the ordinary fee for such a brief to a barrister or attorney is forty dollars, an idea may be formed of the slight chance a Coolie generally has of obtaining legal assistance. The advocate

raised the defence that the immigrants had been absent, on reasonable grounds, to complain to the Immigration Agent-General. There was no question about the case in point of law, but the magistrate took time to consider; and when I drove down to the next court, where I found the hapless defendants waiting in some trepidation, I had the satisfaction of hearing him read a written judgment, explaining the law, and dismissing their summonses.

I shall refer to this judgment hereafter, but the reader may ask what there was extraordinary in this? In itself it was a mere decision of a legal point, yet its bearing on the general method of administering the Immigration laws was rather significant. This act had been in operation for two years. There was no room for doubt that during that period immigrants had frequently absented themselves from their estates to complain at the Immigration Office, yet no magistrate in the colony, so far as we could discover and so far as the Immigration Agents knew, had ever given a similar decision. The point had clearly been taken by the Coolies, and had been overruled by the magistrates. Soon after the ordinance was passed, there is a record that some Coolies relied on this defence in vain. I cannot ascertain at this moment whether it was before the same sagacious magistrate, who so shrewdly discovered the correct law in the prospect of an impending Commission. The Commissioners say: "A party of immigrants came to Georgetown to complain, and were sent back in charge of the police. Four were selected by the rest as spokesmen, and in-

vited to attend the next day, and received a pass from the Immigration Agent-General for that purpose. Their complaints were found groundless, but in the meantime the manager took out a summons against five of them, including one of the delegates, who immediately petitioned the Governor as follows:—

"'The manager has sworn that he would summons the whole lot who went to complain, and we beg to state that, as your Excellency is aware, the same is contrary to the last clause of section 12 of Ordinance 9 of 1868, and your Petitioners humbly pray that your Excellency will give them order to the magistrate of said district so that the said cases may be immediately *squashed!*'

"*They were convicted all the same*, and imprisoned for three weeks. In the meantime the correspondence went on briskly, and the Governor directed them to be pardoned *at once, just after the expiration of their term of imprisonment.*"* It is utter nonsense, I frankly say, for a society in which such anomalies occur to attempt, on the menace of investigation, to play the part of injured innocents. It does them more harm than good. This and other instances led me to the conclusion that a provision should be made to afford free legal assistance to the Coolies in all cases of importance. The inordinate expense of law in British Guiana, the intricacy of many questions arising out of the Immigration Ordinances, and his indifferent knowledge of English, throw the balances in a court of justice heavily against the Coolie. Were a certain sum placed at the disposal of the Immigration Agent-General for securing legal advice at his discretion, or

* Report, &c., par. 491.

were a sufficient number of legal practitioners appointed in the various districts to be protectors of immigrants, and to render free assistance in such cases as seemed reasonably to require it, a long step would be taken towards allaying Coolie prejudices and suspicions. A similar suggestion was made by Mr. Yewens, an experienced clerk to one of the magistrates, who was examined before the Commission.

But the question thus raised not only affected the magistrates, it touched the police. The ordinance afforded protection to the Coolie *en route* for that haven, "Crosby Office." Before the decision, the police did not appear to have regarded the proviso, if indeed it was known to them. Immigrants were constantly stopped and sent home, though occasionally forwarded to the office. After the decision the Inspector-General ordered the police to accompany to the office persons who desired to go there to complain. The right is a valuable one, and should be jealously guarded by the Governor and the Immigration Agents. But it ought to be restricted within reasonable bounds. Striking in large gangs and forsaking work for a long tramp to town is as injurious to the interest of the Coolies as of their masters, and ought to be strictly forbidden. Two or three at most would in all cases be sufficient to represent a grievance at the office. The difficulty suggested by the immigrants was that the messengers became marked men, and were likely to be persecuted, whereas if all came down together the danger was distributed. But I think all these diffi-

culties would give way, and more general content ensue, if facilities were afforded to these poor people to vent their grievances, both by frequent visits of the sub-agents to the estates, and by establishing district agencies of the Immigration Office, where complaints should be received. At first this would give considerable trouble to the employers; but as the Coolies began to discover the uselessness of carrying trifling or untrue stories to the agents, they would settle down more quietly, and the planters would reap the benefit of a more liberal policy. The people are like a lot of children, and half the tact of managing consists in humouring them.

I ought to mention a happy trait in these particular immigrants. Not long after the case was decided in their favour they came down to Des Vœux and offered to repay the money he had given them to secure the advocate. They had made it up among themselves by a general subscription, because they "did not want massa to lose the money for them."

One Sunday morning, about the time when Georgetown streets were swarming with polished ebony faces and startling mischances of colours *en route* for the Cathedral, Mr. Des Vœux came over to me in a hurry to say that he had been sent for to meet a band of Coolies on the other side of the river. A couple of hundred had come down the shore dam during the night, bearing a dead body which they wished to show to him. There seemed to be nothing for it but to go, and before long four sturdy blacks were pulling us away for Pouderoyen from the police stelling. We

arrived just as the magistrate who had opened the inquest and adjourned it was going away. A *post-mortem* had been held, and the body required to be buried immediately. The crowd was a crowd to look at—men and women, with children in arms, all dusty, toil-worn creatures—and I did inspect it sadly. Twelve miles had they come, in solemn procession, through the still, dark, hot night, like "John Brown's soul marching on!" bearing with them their ghastly burthen. And the reason of it? On the afternoon of the day before, the dead man, who was employed about the manager's stables, had, in altercation with a black horse-keeper, been struck and killed. I have already mentioned how easily the Indians die under punishment or the influence of their own rage. The Coolies on the estate collected in some excitement, and their story was, that when the manager heard of it he had said, "Ah! another foul chicken dead;" and had ordered the sick-nurse to inject some spirits into the body, in order that it might appear at the inquest that the deceased had been drunk. Upon this the Coolies alleged they seized the body, and placing it on a bamboo couch, brought it down to "Massa De Voo." This was their story, afterwards totally denied at the inquest by the manager himself, who was at the time ill in bed, and by others who saw the whole occurrence. On a fair review of the matter, I think decidedly the probabilities were against the truth of the Coolie narrative, and that this was one of the noteworthy instances of a suspicion excited perhaps by some incautious word or act, upon which they had

founded a plausible and ingenious story, one which all the cross-examination in the world would hardly have shaken.

Herein lies the very root of the difficulty in administering justice for them. The Indians will concoct a story; witness after witness will state and adhere to it with rigid fidelity; yet again and again they will be incontestably refuted. What a puzzling position for a magistrate, who knows the common propensity of the people, and who has to balance between numbers of half-credible Indian witnesses and one or two white or black men! It is a natural sequence that sometimes when the Hindoo tells the truth he is hardly believed even by his best friend. Indeed, Mr. Des Vœux told me of cases which had come before him in which he had been convinced that Coolies, having a perfectly good case, but being conscious of their own bad reputation, had suborned black men to swear to the same facts with themselves. Frequently the magistrate is thrown back upon the formula which, as I have heard, used to be applied by a celebrated judge in Bombay :—"Forty witnesses have sworn to certain facts, and on the other side eighty have sworn to facts directly contrary. I am therefore forced wholly to discard the evidence, and to base my decision on a review of the probabilities." Yet this weakness in Coolie morals need not lead a judge to lay down the hard-and-fast rule that one white man's evidence is better than that of many Hindus. It should make him all the more diligent in sifting and comparing such undeniable facts in the

evidence as tend to throw light upon the likelihood of the truth or untruth of the rest. But I have been forgetting the crowd which, now that the excitement had been worn out of them by their long tramp, and the doctor had given evidence that their "mattie" (mate) had died of "ruptured spleen," and the magistrate had assured them justice should be done, were standing awkwardly waiting for the burial before they went away. We must needs see the body, which lay under the police-station covered with a piece of calico. The poor son of toil lay silent and stiff and stark. Surgeons' incisions down the front and along the side had been neatly sewed up. Upon the face and open glassy eyes there was fixed in death the last glance of mingled pain and hatred. "He was a well-made man," said the commissary coolly, as he threw the light sheet over it again, and, just as he said so, a loud, deep peal of thunder shook the sky above us, recalling to me with solemn distinctness that whatever the play or paralysis of right may be below, there is above a fixed tribunal, where an inevitable and exact justice shall be meted out to rich and poor, to strong and weak alike. After a few words of encouragement and reassurance, we went home, I, for one, carrying in my mind a never-to-be-forgotten scene.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHINESE SETTLEMENT.

ONE tide—some forty miles or so—up the Demerara river is a settlement of free Chinese. During the reign of Governor Hincks, and, I was told, chiefly on the suggestion of Mr. Des Vœux, a tract of land on the Camoudi Creek was assigned for the habitation of Chinese Coolies whose indentures had expired. These poor people, unable, because they lacked the means, to return to their own country, had attracted the sympathy of Mr. Des Vœux, who conceived the idea of settling them on free allotments of land. In the exercise of their usual industry and ingenuity he hoped that they would attain to some better condition than could be purchased by the scanty wages of labour. There can be no question about the policy of such a movement. To open to the Coolie the prospect of a permanent land settlement after he had worked out his indentures, must be the only principle on which immigration can be allowed to continue. The matter was taken up by the Governor and the Court of Policy, and a large number, most of them Christians, were removed to the creek, under the

leadership of an evangelist named O Tye Kim. The place was satirically named Hopetown—the word "Hope" being the name of an admiral.

They were placed in a locality where, during the first rainy season, they were flooded out. Yet in the end they succeeded in clearing and cultivating a range of some extent. From a very able paper, prepared by a local committee, to preface the catalogue of contributions from British Guiana to the Paris Universal Exhibition, I transcribe an account, no less important than interesting, as, allowing for the amount of exaggeration inherently natural to exhibition puffs, it embodies the planters' opinion of the settlement in 1867 :—

"The inhabitants have cleared about five miles on the banks of the river and its tributary creeks; they have erected dwellings in uninterrupted succession along the clearing; they have built forty ovens, at a cost of sixty dollars each, for burning charcoal, and have succeeded in reducing the price of that indispensable commodity thirty per cent. The trade had previously been monopolised by the Madeirans, who burn their charcoal in pits. The ovens are considered to be a decided improvement. The settlers have, moreover, planted ginger, sweet potatoes, plantains, and other vegetable products. They have pigs valued at one thousand dollars; they have planted one hundred and fifty acres in rice, calculated to yield six hundred bags valued at nine dollars each; the population is one hundred and seventy, of whom forty are Christians; they are well fed, well clothed, and com-

fortable; they have had but one death; on the other hand, there has been but one birth. They have erected a temporary chapel and school-house, of neat construction, as might be expected from them. They possess three large punts besides bateaux, and they keep up a constant trading intercourse with the capital. The Report concludes with this significant fact: there has been as yet no case brought before the magistrate. [It is just possible it would have been more correct to say, 'there has been no magistrate brought before a case,' for the place is very secluded.] The settlement has been in existence little more than two years, and has had to contend with many difficulties."

So long as O Tye Kim remained with the people, he exercised over them a very beneficial influence. But in a weak moment he made a serious moral slip, and, finding exposure inevitable, absconded. I heard of him again the other day from a well-known Chinese missionary, who told me he had since seen him in China, whither he had gone, after a residence in the United States, and had engaged in some illegal scheme of emigration to that country. Mr. O Tye Kim evidently needs that the eye of Bret Harte, or at least of "Bill Nye," should be fixed upon him. At the time of my visit to Demerara, the settlement was not in favour with the planters. The rosy hues of exhibition times had departed, and charcoal tints had supervened. When I inquired about it, they shrugged their shoulders, and said it was "a mistake." From their point of view a mistake it undoubtedly

was. It secluded a number of available labourers; and the natural policy of the British Guianian Government is as far as possible to place labourers in such a position as that they shall be obliged to work. It afforded an asylum to deserters from the estates. Moreover, instead of devoting themselves, as it had been hoped they would, to the production of food or staples, the Chinese had taken to charcoal-burning, a manufacture which they perform with unrivalled skill.

Des Vœux had not seen these people for some time, and I was desirous of conversing with persons who were freed from the restraints of indentureship; we accordingly arranged an expedition to the creek.

On the 17th of August we drove down to the Chinese wharf, where Des Vœux's invaluable coal-black Sam awaited us with the luggage. We were to take the only highway available—the water. Our vehicle was a long Portuguese boat, over the middle of which was built a "tent," or cabin, capable of holding eight or ten persons. Our crew consisted of a captain and six swarthy Africans. A young fellow, with a hopelessly flat physiognomy, accompanied us as interpreter. The "Chinese stelling" is the agency of the Chinese settlement. Hither they send their products for sale. A large quantity of charcoal was stored under the shed, four or five naked Chinamen preparing it for delivery. In the shop at the entrance was a bench for opium-smoking, on which lay a couple of fellows idiotised by the poison. Noontide —hot beyond describing. "Where's the ice?" Not come?—we must wait for *that*. In a quarter of an

hour we have it, and swaddle it lovingly in soft, thick blankets. We get away by one; over the stelling and under the heated shelter, the yellow water glaring around us. "Ready? Give way all." The heavy sweeps tumble into the water, our crew fall into a quiet swing, carrying us out past the ships and schooners and barges, then alongside the muddy banks with fringing brushwood, or where the tall, strong moco-moco weed palisades the front. Soon we are out of sight of houses, and only get glimpses here and there of sugar buildings or an estate stelling. Broad, and smooth, and level is the river—silent, with scarcely a boat to be seen. Here and there upon the mud stalks the white ibis. The sun glistens on the reeking limbs of the oarsmen and flames ceaselessly about us, while we try to forget him in talk of England, or in chess, or in some grateful, cooling drink served by the imperturbable Sam. So we go on, mile after mile, hour after hour, the banks never rising more than a few feet above the stream, the imperious vegetation bordering our view, and subduing far unseen and illimitable areas. So—till evening begins to draw in, and the river has narrowed to about half a mile. Here is the entrance to the creek—some twenty yards wide, a glistening current of coffee-coloured water—that strange ebonised "bush-water," which silently plays here like powerful, glancing muscles on a brown arm, and anon curls and eddies round us like the smiles on a Negro's face. On the left as we go in are high trees and a foliage fuller and richer than

any I had seen; on the right, for awhile bush, then clearing and Chinese huts. The creek is deep, with a strong current, and many a cunning wind, making the passage for our heavy boat rather ticklish, especially as we have no keel to steady us. As we entered the creek it began to grow dark. The gloom was grand, enlivened only by the gleaming of the Stygian water; the great trees bent over us in grotesque attitudes, our oars plashing softly, and the little, flat-nosed interpreter vociferating from the roof in hope of rousing the inhabitants. At length he succeeds. To his shrill nasal responds a deep frog-tone, as from a man who has no palate, and we hear the inhabitants waking the echoes a long way up the bank. Four miles farther we arrive at the rude stelling of our intended host, Lum-a-Yung. The vocal exercise of our interpreter was here a study; but it resulted in the approach of a small lamp and some men and women. Cautiously footing it along the round trunks, a gentle hand guiding me through the darkness, I find myself, after a devious walk, at a house-door, inside which steps my conductor, and then, holding out his hand, says, "Welcome, sir," like any born gentleman anywhere else. I enter a better house than I have seen inhabited by any immigrant in the colony. A spacious room, with hard earth floor, lofty pitched roof built of a strong timber frame, with bamboo slots nailed on, half an inch apart, and neatly thatched with the leaves of the Eta-palm. Two rooms are partitioned off from the main one by screens as light as the outer walls. Spite of the airiness of

these, a peculiar acrid smell affected me, which I was afterwards able to resolve into the elementary effluvia of opium, tobacco, fire, and the live-stock in the corner, not to mention an open drain that circumvented the house. But we are weary, and not particular. Forth came our hostess Moonshee, who had turned out of bed to receive us—a little, quaint-faced, yellow woman, showing ever so much teeth, and such an abnormal quantity of gums! And here are the host's brother and his wife and wife's sister; the wife, a Chinese Mrs. Conrady—no single feature, uglier or prettier than the rest. I wished I could glorify them or forget their masks—they were all so gentle and so kind! In five minutes our hammocks had been slung by deft hands from beam to beam, and, my mosquito-net rigged, I rolled in, to wait for dinner. For Sam is already at work: witness the glowing charcoal out there in the kitchen-shed. A cackling protest indicates that Lum-a-Yung is sacrificing two chickens to the Chinese god of hospitality. Another petroleum lamp is lit, a table set, my bathing-sheet is pressed into service as a table-cloth, and in half an hour we are eating, off Worcester ware, broiled chicken, Cambridge sausages, Cincinnati ham, and drinking iced beer and St. Lucia coffee—the ice from Wenham Lake, the beer from Burton, the hosts from China, and the two white men, whose race has made this wondrous conjunction possible, swinging there in aboriginal South American hammocks. Was not that worth a thought?

After dinner and a little talk our friends dis-

appeared to their sleeping-places, whence came occasional tokens of parental and infantile discrepancy. Des Vœux and I lay awake playing chess and conversing. The heat was trying, the smell obnoxious, the fleas were sharp, those fowls within a few feet of me mighty uneasy, the dog and cat would not agree, every now and then a bat or a huge beetle hurtled against the light bamboo. I almost wished for the nonce the Aborigines' Protection Society were out to look after their own business.

Early in the morning many Chinese began to come in from the village, and soon filled the room. We occupied our hammocks, round which they ranged themselves. Their demeanour was free but polite, beyond that of any labourers I have ever seen. They bowed or shook hands, cordially welcoming my companion. When any part of our conversation was not comprehended by any one of them, a touch elicited an explanation in a low tone from some cleverer neighbour. If a hasty young scamp rushed noisily into the house, a quick hand was clapped over his mouth, and silence or ejectment was enforced with ridiculous solemnity. We asked them first about their life at the settlement. They unanimously complained that they had not received, as they were led to expect, assurances of their property in the land, and that the privilege originally accorded to them of cutting wood for charcoal free along their own side of the stream was now denied to them. They were shrewdly suspicious; attributing this to the fact that an official, a member of the

Court of Policy, owned the land on the other side of the creek, whence they were now obliged to obtain the wood, paying him a royalty. They knew all about the Commission, and were eagerly looking for some beneficial result from its labours—an expectation I grieved to be forced to stifle. They evidently desired to be sent back to their own country. Some assured us that this had been promised to them in China at the time of enlistment, though it was contrary to the terms authorised by the colony. One man, who had been many years absent from China, told us he had left a wife and children there in the expectation of returning to them. He had never heard of them since. As this was translated to us others nodded their heads, in confirmation from their own experience. To me this was inexpressibly sad.

Selecting the most intelligent, we asked him to "tell his story." There was instant silence in the crowd, and they listened eagerly as sentence after sentence was transposed into English by the interpreter.

"In my own country I was a schoolmaster. I was well taught. I heard that people were going to Demerary, and I was asked to go. Agent told me it was a nice place—many of my countrymen were going: over there they had plenty of work to do —plenty money—would get rich: food was found at first, and a doctor if we were sick, and good wages. I was told the work was garden work. I thought that meant like our gardening in China. I did not

think it was like the hard work in sugar-field here. I was told, if I came, I could soon get good pay as schoolmaster, and I hired as schoolmaster. There were others like me who came in the ship. There was a doctor, some schoolmasters, some tailors, and other people who were not labourers in the fields, and who all thought they were going to work at their own trades.* When we got to Georgetown we were taken out of the ship and sent to sugar estate. At first they gave us food and rooms in houses. The rooms were dirty and not nice. Then they told us to work in the fields. We did not like it, but we had to do it. If we did not work we were brought before magistrate and fined or sent to prison. It was very hard for us. Some became sick. We could not earn enough to buy food from week to week. We had part of our bounty, but that was soon done. Some had given so much money to friends in China, and the manager wished us to pay it back, and took it from our wages. We could not bear it any longer, so we struck and came to Georgetown. We went to the attorney—he told us we were wrong and must go back. The police took us to carry us to the steamer, and several jumped into the water. They were taken out, and we went to Mr. ——. He spoke kindly to us, and sent us home, and after that they did not take our money every week. It was always very hard work. Several of my

* I can scarcely believe *this* is true, though I fear the recruiting agents don't stand on trifles. Besides, he had already contrasted field-work in the two countries.

friends hung themselves because they were starving. When I was free I came up here. I want to go back to my own country."

There was general sympathy with this sentiment. 'Tis a very simple, uneventful story on paper, yet not without its interest to any man who loves his kind. A mere skeleton of a life, to be filled out, or at least covered in, by a daily experience of plodding toil, of petty interests and vexations, of monotonous circumstances, broken now and then by a few days in hospital—all in a strange land. You may see here how, without active cruelty, with a careful and even honest attention to the legal responsibilities of his relation to the labourer on the part of the employer, there may yet be felt a wanting something to fill up the scale in the balance of equity, and effect the consequent mutuality of good-will. This immigrant relation should not only be looked upon as one of pure contract; if anything, it is properly more like that of the ancient patriarchal times—like that of Abraham and his servants. No legal adjustments can make it a happy one unless there is conjoined with them, on the side of the employer, a spirit of generosity and of half-parental kindliness. There was a gentleman in Demerara of whom it was said that he had rarely if ever brought an immigrant into court. The Commissioners speak markedly of the superior independent bearing of his Coolies. Mr. Clementson's name deserves honourable mention. A number of such men would infuse into Guianian society a spirit which I should conceive to

be more effectual than any law. This might be fostered by an able and genial Governor, and by a body of local officials who were, like the chivalry of old, *sans peur et sans reproche.*

At noon I walked some distance through the settlement. The gardens and the cultivation about most of the houses were neatly kept, the houses were generally good and clean, the charcoal furnaces admirably made, and all in operation. My conclusion was that the Chinese I saw were better off than those on the estates. I was informed, however, that the whole village was not so flourishing, that indeed in some parts there was much distress. The dreadful heat forbade a lengthened investigation. I give the opinion with reserve, but it seemed to me the experiment has not been fairly carried out, and that if fairly carried out in a more convenient locality it would be more successful. The Commissioners also visited the place, and speak favourably of the scheme of land settlement, not only in this case, but as a general matter of policy, though they also are doubtful about the locality. These Chinese, they say, "are somewhat too far from Georgetown, and, in consequence, from the support of civilising associations and rules; but that of itself would not lead us to despair of the future of Hopetown, if some means could be devised to give them a better chance as cultivators."

After listening all day to strange stories, we took advantage of the tide towards midnight, and bidding good-bye to our generous host and hostess, whom I shall ever gratefully remember, we pushed off into

the gloom—sweeping down the rapid and tortuous stream, with no small risk, till we reached the safe bosom of the calmer river. Though the thermometer was 75° or so, we were obliged to wrap up to keep off a chill; nevertheless symptoms of the wretched fever of the colony drove me next afternoon to the doctor.

CHAPTER X.

A CATTLE FARM.

DURING the first week in August, the skies meanwhile weeping fiercely several times every twenty-four hours, I accompanied a party, by the invitation of its hospitable and ever-pleasant agent, Mr. Godfrey, to the Drill Farm. A favourite trip is this to such gentlemen of the colony as are lucky enough to be on good terms with my host. The Drill Farm is a great cattle farm, situated some distance from Georgetown, towards Berbice, and, as one of the exceptional industries of British Guiana, a brief description of it may not be unwelcome, though admittedly irrelevant.

Up at six, and soon after rattling along with R. T. H. to the railway station. For Demerara has a railway some fourteen or fifteen miles long, running past a few villages to the creek of Mahaica. Our party soon collects; more are to be picked up further on. The "cars" are not much larger than those which run on city tramways, and of similar construction; that is, with the seats along the side and on the top for those who can bear the sun. As it is early,

we choose the open air. We are soon shrieking and bumping across the flat country, the only engineering difficulties having arisen out of the necessity for wooden bridges over the canals, as they occur every hundred yards or so. Our engineer and stokers are blacks—reckless imps enough—and certainly, had I not known there was soft marsh on either side of the way, I should have felt some nervousness as our vehicle swung and oscillated over the badly-laid road. What salamanders those drivers must be! Our progress was enlivened by continual whistling to warn off parties of Coolies or Negroes, who found this the shortest and most agreeable way to Georgetown, the hair-breadth escapes of some of these at the bridges giving us an amount of excitement calculated to allay the sense of danger to ourselves.

At Victoria village, on the little platform, beamed on us from under his puggery the cheery face of the Inspector-General of Police. He was not waiting to arrest us, but was there with Mr. M., the stipendiary magistrate of the district, to lead us into temptation. The young Wesleyan minister on the roof looked at us curiously when we were solemnly summoned into the "waiting-room," and the door was closed. A brisk Negro then produced a bucket of ice, an American ice "pitcher," and the materials for a gigantic "swizzle," which the practised hand of the Inspector-General, wielding his implement—the swizzle-stick—with greater skill than he ever wielded his general's staff, soon turned out frosty and frothy, sputtering and trembling to get into one's mouth.

All this was going on regardless of the passengers or the time-table. The guard, who put his head and his watch in at the door in a remonstrating attitude, was forthwith collared and experimented upon with the same delicious medicine. This was the morning refresher, not a little needful, since we should not reach our breakfast until eleven o'clock.

Mahaica is a wide creek of deep, black water; near it stands one of the Coolie gaols, from which the prisoners are sent out in gangs to work on the estates. Our horses and traps were extracted from the train amid a tumult of water—there called "a tropical shower"—and we commenced a long drive, mostly through a country of abandoned estates; the tokens of Dutch industry, or rather of Negro labour and Dutch tyranny, still remaining in the endless intersecting lines of trenches. We were in the police-waggon—*absit omen!*—a huge basket of provisions nearly crowding us out, and our beloved Inspector-General doing his best to break the springs with that transcendent British solidity of his. Alternately we passed wild bush and stretches of a mile or two of swampy grass, the cattle standing in the water and eating the tops off. In a couple of hours we reached our destination, a pretty garden, well laid out, and—rare decoration in these latitudes—an iron gate, which, being opened, permits us to drive 'neath flowering trees to the wooden house, paintless, but vast and comfortable. Up the steps we find a wide gallery furnished as a sitting-room and dining-room, in fact *the* place to live all day, lounging in the basket-chairs or swinging in the hammocks. The

Drill Farm is a bachelor establishment, and only occasionally invaded by such parties as ours. The *abandon* is perfect. You eat, drink, and sleep when you like. The ingenuity of the host and that ceaselessly restless Inspector-General are exercised in providing some fresh surprise of delicacy or cooling drink every hour. Anon, we issue forth in the now glaring sun, with guns under arm, in search of alligators or plover.

In the early morning—not to say anything of the night, for Drill Farm mosquitoes make the most of their very rare chances—a tremendous shouting and lowing filled the woods about the house, indicating that the "driving-in" was in progress. The cattle are permitted to roam wild through marsh and wood to feed themselves during the week, and are driven in by their keepers on a certain day to be counted.

Here they come, converging from all parts, crackling through the forest, plunging through the marshes, galloping along the roads, the closing ring of men and boys deeply or sharply calling, the cattle uttering their complaints in bovine bass or treble. One was forced to turn out in spite of himself. When I ran down to the yard, a mass of black mud surrounded by a stout fence, I found it full of excited animals, leaping, lowing, and struggling; fine English-bred cows or bulls beside the lapped and hunch-backed Indians, the wild breeds of Orinoco, or powerful descendants of Western Prairies. Presently some bars were dropped, and the manager, standing on the fence with pencil and book, cleverly counted the masses as

they rushed tumultuously by, nearly a thousand having been driven into the pen that morning from one portion of the farm. The cattle of Demerara are a credit to the colony. They afford good beef—for the tropics, and the trade in them to Coolies is enormous. Great care and enterprise are exhibited on some of the farms in securing good breeds, and doubtless with pecuniary results not unsatisfactory to the proprietors.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COMMISSION AND SOME OF ITS CONCOMITANTS.

AFTER a delay of six weeks, Mr. W. E. Frere, the third member of the Commission, arrived in Georgetown. By the previous steamer had also arrived the Advocate-General of Bengal, Mr. Cowie, retained by the planters in London, with a fabulous fee, to represent them on the inquiry. Let me say here how much both truth and good feeling were assisted, and how fortunate was every one concerned, in an accession to the *personnel* of the investigation so thoroughly high-minded and gentlemanly. The Government was now in a position to constitute the Commission. For though it had been ordered by Lord Granville, it was, in form, an inquiry on behalf of the Colonial Executive.

An act already existed conferring on the Commissioners the powers usually accorded in the colony to special commissions appointed by the Governor, but enduing them with very inadequate and clumsy means of enforcing their demands on refractory witnesses. The right given by the colonial act to prosecute or sue such persons before the Superior Court, which was empowered to punish them by fine, was

clearly illusory in its constraint on wealthy planters. The Commissioners very firmly insisted on receiving additional powers: the Court of Policy was therefore summoned on Thursday, August 25th, and in one day passed through all its stages a bill conferring those powers on the Commission.

In the afternoon, a *Gazette Extraordinary* so called —not that I wish any one to presume the *Royal Gazette*, in its usual issues, is not an extraordinary affair—announced the formal opening of the Commission on the following day. It contained also another proclamation, relative to Mr. Cowie and myself, in effect desiring all persons to take notice that we had turned up in the colony with the alleged determination of appearing before the Commission in behalf of certain persons, but assuring all persons whatsoever that we had no official connection with it. This unprecedented production, I was given to understand, was one of those specimens of weak elasticity sometimes exhibited by the ministry at home. A member of Parliament had asked a question in the House relative to the retainer by the planters of the Bengal Government official in a capacity that might seem hostile to the Coolies. The Colonial Office, which was at least aware of Mr. Cowie's journey, pressed between the philanthropists and the West India Committee, both with powerful representatives in Parliament, hit upon the expedient of publishing a disclaimer of Mr. Cowie's official relation to the business. I, respecting whom no such question could arise, had the honour to be

coupled in the proclamation with my learned and agreeable friend, in order, I suppose, to ease off the awkwardness of the advertisement. If I acted as a "buffer" to any one's feelings, it is a use of me which I cannot resent. I wish, however, our rulers would act always on principle, and not in spasms.

On the 26th, at twelve o'clock, Georgetown, ever hot enough, had worked itself up to a climax of anxious heat. The vast but ungainly "Public Buildings" were the centre of converging excitement. Whites, drabs, browns, and yellows—merchants, lawyers, doctors, planters—were collecting, while Negroes and a few Coolies lounged without, or formed a closely-packed source of caloric and other consequences within. The Commission sat in the Supreme Court, a reasonably large rectangular room, with arrangements similar to those of an English court of justice. On the bench were the Commissioners: below it sat the secretary of the Commission, Mr. Davis, a young gentleman; native of the colony, who has deservedly received from the Commissioners in their Report very high commendation. The temper of the colony may be judged of from the treatment experienced by this gentleman, who was bold and honourable enough to be independent. He was one of the many persons attacked by a scurrilous writer, who, under the pseudonym of "Fair Play," attacked every one not distinctly favourable to the planters. My colleague, Mr. Carbery, a young but rising barrister in the colony, who did good service after my departure, and deserves honour and grati-

tude from all interested in the Coolie, afterwards endeavoured to unmask, by proceedings in the Superior Court, a person whom he designated on oath as the author, without any repudiation by the person referred to—a principal attorney in the colony. Mr. Davis's conduct on the Commission is now regarded in the colonial community as a barrier to his success; but no doubt the Home Government will take care that he does not suffer by his independence. I may mention another instance significant of the tone of public opinion—and this I conceive to be infinitely more important in considering the Coolie system than any legal and administrative regulations; for the effectiveness of these, unless they are sustained by the feeling and opinion of a community, will always be matter of uncertainty. I had great difficulty in obtaining any one to act as a clerk, or in any way to assist me. One coloured person who was bold enough to offer his assistance turned out to have been a compulsory visitor to Massaruni, the penal settlement. At length I was fortunate in finding an Englishman, newly arrived, and perhaps unduly careless of consequences; for he was repeatedly warned by managers and others that *he was ruining his prospects in British Guiana.* To these matters I allude, because they are of that subtle and intangible nature that no Commission could lay hold of, and yet are more telling than many facts. A society the governing portion of which is endued with a temper so inflexible, can blame only itself if injustice is sometimes done to its goodness. One

cannot but think that instances such as these are not confined to the special cases named, or to a subordinate class of society. The spirit they indicate must show itself on many occasions, and through all grades of the community—must, indeed, restrain the free action or expression of opinion of any but the few who are absolutely independent. This to my own mind was the worst evidence presented against the planting community, taking it in the general—I carefully guard myself from implicating many of its individuals—and it is because I think it the worst that I refer to it. The prevalence of an influence like this may, nay must, clog the wheels of government, thwart the administration of justice, and disturb the moral equilibrium of many fine minds. Could an ingenuous and generous spirit be transfused by those of my planter friends who possess it through their brother classes of British Guiana, I, for one, should feel more confidence in that influence alone, than in all the checks and counter-checks of an elaborate legal system. Unhappily, the hostile attitude too often assumed by those who, in the generous heat of philanthropy, criticise the proceedings of such a society as that of British Guiana, contribute to hold together, not only in common action but in common spirit, men of markedly dissimilar culture, taste, and feeling. The noblest humaneness, let us ever strive to remember, is not the most suspicious or the hastiest to form adverse opinions.

The Commission was opened in due form. Mr. Cowie asked leave to appear not so much in the

character of an advocate as of a disinterested searcher after truth. My own declaration was similar, and the Commissioners then announced that we and all others were free to suggest any questions or facts likely to assist them, but that they were the inquirers, and could not recognise any one as an advocate. On the succeeding day they began to take the evidence of Mr. Des Vœux. The first sessions were exciting, but always conducted with a dignity and decorum equal to that of the most august courts I have ever seen.

The examination of Mr. Des Vœux, whose letter to Lord Granville had given rise to the inquiry, proved to be of a very unsatisfactory character. Though some of his charges were wide in their range, and others specific, he was unable to verify the former from any but vaguely-expressed remembrances, while the latter proved to have been incorrectly stated, or not always to warrant the conclusions drawn from them. In fact, Mr. Des Vœux had written a very long and serious letter, with the honestest of intentions, but with the least business-like of performance. According to his own account, this was done, upon the spur of a report which led him to fear the colony to be in danger, without notes, memoranda, or documents to verify his statements. He considered himself, by the circumstances, justified in relying on his general remembrance of the conclusions formed by him in the course of five years' experience in the colony. That he had, to a considerable extent, read the state of its society aright is

proved by the Report; that he was justified in expressing them in the definite, exaggerated, and formal manner in which he wrote to Lord Granville, hardly admits of argument. Yet I think that this was for critics and not for the Commissioners to consider, and in the Report before me the severe animadversions on Mr. Des Vœux's conduct would appear to be beyond the proper sphere of their duty, and to have been more appropriate from a Colonial Minister reflecting on the issue of the inquiry, than coming from the persons appointed to inquire and report. When they speak, for instance, in this manner, are they not commenting needlessly on the witness, instead of confining their judgments to his evidence? "Before proceeding to consider the system, we must express a decided opinion that Mr. Des Vœux was ill-advised in bringing, under any circumstances, a series of charges so vague, so sweeping, and so little admitting of satisfactory proof, as those which we have hitherto discussed. Although we agree with him in believing some of the most important of the facts which he has adduced to prove them, yet in order to substantiate them fully more was required; and we consider that in default of surer knowledge and wider information he was personally not entitled to bring them. *It was never required or expected of him* (?) that he should, as he expresses it, 'prove by his own evidence the whole of his case;' but *it was incumbent on him* to produce sufficient evidence to excuse at least, if not to justify, all the imputations and insinuations of which his letter is full." Such remarks as these I could myself

have written with both truth and propriety, any friend of the planters might fairly have argued, or a Secretary of State have indignantly affirmed; but the Commissioners seem to me in this particular to have travelled out of their sphere. With this difficulty in my mind it would be dishonest in me not to express it. Mr. Des Vœux, as they state, explained to the Commissioners that in writing this letter he did not expect to be called upon to prove it by his own evidence, though he was prepared, were time and opportunity given him, to substantiate it from evidence existing in the colony. The opportunity was denied him previously to the opening of the Commission. An application to the Governor to permit him to examine certain records was refused, exactly as a similar application by the planters' committee had been rejected. This and a very serious accident to his spine which befell him but a short time before the inquiry, unquestionably rendered him unfit to appear to support his long indictment, and it was an unfortunate fact for the truth that so much had been, by his previous policy, made to depend on his own knowledge and precision of statement. For both these proved imperfect.

Nevertheless it is due to Mr. Des Vœux to say that on one or two points absolute justice does not seem to have been done him in the Report; but the discussion of this must be postponed to my review, at a later stage, of the Coolie system in British Guiana.

After him a large number of witnesses came forward, the principal being the Immigration Agent-General

and sub-agent, the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, Mr. Oliver, of the planters' committee, to produce a series of most elaborate and costly statistics, Portuguese merchants, magistrates, barristers, doctors, &c., &c. Wherever evidence had been given implicating any person, he was permitted if he pleased to clear himself on oath. The whole of the public evidence was published, in very handsome form, and with admirable correctness, by the *Colonist*, their very skilful reporter and sub-editor having taken it down in shorthand. From this evidence I only excerpt the amusing episode of the Coolie Hulloman, or Hoonimaun, which the reader may take *cum grano*. Fortunately most of the Coolie examinations are unreported.

Hulloman, a Coolie, examined.

The President—Is your name Hulloman?—Yes, sir.

What religion are you, a Christian?—A Hindoo.

Mr. Cowie—Then, if I might be allowed to suggest, he should be solemnly affirmed.

The President—Is that how he would be sworn here by the law?

Mr. Cowie—The Solicitor-General tells me Hindoo witnesses are generally asked how they would prefer to be sworn.

The President—Will you be satisfied with my interpretation?

Mr. Russell—If I may be permitted, he has been my driver for a number of years, and speaks English nearly as well as I can.

The witness was then sworn with a glass of water, which he declared to be his oath.

Sir George Young—When did you come here?—This country, sir?

Sir George Young—Yes.

Hulloman—Twenty-one years ago; past one-and-twenty years.

Sir George Young—You came out to work on plantation?—Yes; I came out to Anna Regina, in Capoey.

You were indentured there?—That time I came I was indentured for six months.

Why were you there only six months?—The estate "broke," and all the Coolies went away.

Where did you go then?—I have been about Capoey, working all about, sir.

Did you indenture again?—No, sir.

You got to be a driver, where was that first?—First under Mr. —— at ——, on the West Coast. I left Capoey to go to ——.

How long did you stay at ——?—Something like eleven years; nine or ten years. I cannot tell exactly, but I lived there very long, sir.

Were you a driver all that time?—Sometimes I worked in the field with the task gang.

When you first went to ——, did you go as foreman or driver?—No, no; working task gang among the village blacks; then the manager took me to be driver to the Coolie gang.

How long were you a driver?—It may be some fourteen or fifteen years since I began driving.

When you left ——, where did you go?—I had one and a half years in town then.

And after that?—Under Mr. McCalman, at Farm.

Were you a driver then?—Yes.

For how long?—About one and a half years, something like that.

How long is it since you came away from Farm?—I worked one year and three months at Peters' Hall.

And after Peters' Hall?—I came into town, and stayed six months.

What was the next estate you went to?—Windsor Forest, Mr. Cameron's place.

And after that?—I have been at Plantation Blankenburg, with another Mr. Cameron.

Are you at Blankenburg now?—No, sir; I am back in town.

Did you go to any estate since you were at Blankenburg?—No, sir; that was the last.

So you have been at Anna Regina, at Leonora, at Farm, at Peters' Hall, at Windsor Forest, and at Blankenburg, all those estates?—Yes.

Which did you like best of all those estates?—I worked for Mr. —— long time; he had an overseer named Mr. ——. He came and told me one afternoon in the house, manager want me; manager treat me very bad, say Mr. Crosby come, I must take bounty.

I asked you which estate of all those you liked best?—Every one estate is going bad, I was beginning to tell all serious. I liked ——, but at last I

was obliged to go; manager treat me bad. Next morning Mr. —— himself met me, and asked me to take the bounty money, and stop on the estate. I said, "No; the estate no good; one day absent you carry me to the magistrate and put me in gaol; me no want bounty money now." I worked my full week; next week I asked manager to give me leave to take a little walk to Berbice; I wanted to go to Berbice. He said he would, but must have somebody in my place before he give me a pass. At that time I took one Coolie named Ram Lall, and put him in my place. I told manager I had put a man in my place, and the manager gave me a pass to go to Berbice. When I came back from Berbice, I heard Mr. Crosby had given bounty money and gone back; so I go to my room. Next morning I go to the manager, who say, "Well, Mr. Hoonimaun, my friend, have you come back?" and I said, "Yes."

The President—Is your name Hoonimaun?—Yes. Manager say, "Me keep two shops, one on the estate, and one in the village. And me keep cows. Where you get all these things?" I say, "Me worked, get them that way." He say, "Oh yes, me know your tricks, me soon learn you other tricks." So the manager called a constable named Louis, and he carried me to the police-station, and before Mr. Daly, the magistrate at Stewartville.

Well, and then what happened?—One day and one night I was there, and the next day at three o'clock Mr. Daly loosed me on bail. At the very same time me pay my money down, Mr. —— come in, and he

say, "My God, you go loose that man! You not right to let the man loose." And Mr. Daly say, "Well, I cannot help it now." So I go in my house, and I see all my shop broken up; me ask the people who did it, but they no tell me anything; me ask my wife, but she not know who do so; she was in her room. So I come to town to the lawyer the same day, and I fetch a barrister. Me hire barrister and a carriage, but Mr. —— did not come to the court when I appear in the court.

I.—Will you ask him what fee he paid?—Me paid Mr. —— $30 for the fee, and $5 for the waggon. I come into court with Mr. ——, and Mr. Daly say, "You must come in court next week, go now." So next week again, I go to Stewartville Court. Me no see barrister, me no see manager; both me no see. So me stop until the court over. Then me go close to Mr. Daly, and me say, "Mr. Daly, you no call my case, sir." Mr. Daly tell me, manager no come to the court; very heavy charge against me; rob the estate. Next court, manager come, and will send me to Massaruni. So I come into town to barrister, to tell me why he no come; and he say, "You must go to Mr. Daly, and get your bail money; the case is dropped against you. Manager no make out case. So me go to the magistrate, and me tell him he give me bail money; barrister say manager got no proof, case dropped. But Mr. Daly tell me he cannot give me the money because manager have good case against me next week, and so long he could not give me the money. Then me

say, "You magistrate, you must make manager give me the money." Mr. Daly say, "Mr. —— very good man; he might have you locked up, because you rob the estate; but he no go against you."

Well, did you get the money at last?—Yes.

How much money did you get?—$50. I gave $50 bail.

And Mr. Daly did not send you to Massaruni?—No. Manager say, "Take your things off the estate, and go away." Well, me no place to go to, no things to take.

Why did you leave ——?—Me left P——, and me go to ——.

Why did you leave ——?—The summer before last, or something like that.

But why?—The manager and me quarrel, sir.

What was your quarrel with the manager about? Don't tell a long story; make it as short as you can. —Very well, sir. One Saturday, about three o'clock, manager came to my house, and he ask me, "Driver, have you not seen the hog-minder?" So I ran out and call people, and they call the hog-minder. I ask why he not mind hogs; and the hog-minder say, "Me got nine bitts last week, and the manager say, 'Send to the missy.'" So me ask him what he send for.

The President—I don't want all you said and he said; tell us what happened.—Missy make cassava bread, and plantation hog-minder say, "Me no got half a bitt to buy nothing;" so I tell manager, and the manager give me one blow on the breast, and me

fall down, sir—me fall down, sir; and my head get cut here, sir (pointing to the back of it).

The President—Never mind your head; I suppose it is healed by this time.—Then the manager got hold of me by the neck, and threw me down again, and told me to be off the estate.

And you left the estate?—Yes.

Did you bring any charge against the manager?—Me come to town, and me see barrister.

Did you lodge a complaint against the manager?—Yes; me bring him up, and me had barrister, sir.

What happened? Was the manager punished or not?—No; manager begged that the case should not be taken on, and barrister consent to satisfaction; and the manager gave $40.

Did you get the $40?—I got something like $40. I cannot remember how much I got of it. I had to pay lawyer.

And you dropped the case?—Yes, sir; and he drove me away from the estate.

If I heard one, I heard five or six hundred of such stories as that.

CHAPTER XII.

COOLIE PETITIONS.

BESIDES the many deputations of Coolies from the estates, all persons who were in any way connected with the Commission became the suffering recipients of many letters and petitions. Some of these in Chinese I still possess, written on all sorts of paper—brown, straw, candle-box, cartridge, &c., one on a tiny slip of scarlet torn off a wall or cut from a book. The woes contained in such documents were naturally unfathomable to me, but I sent them to the Commission, on whose application the government interpreter translated them into English. Asiatic ingenuity and craft were sometimes plainly written between the lines, and although some of them may have been based on facts, the Commissioners found on testing them that many were built upon fiction. We were not, however, let off with Chinese unreadables; the *cacoethes scribendi* seized upon a large number of black persons in different villages, who, possessing a poor smattering of education, and an uncouth power of writing, ply a trade as village secretaries or "lawyers." These fellows unmercifully fleeced the igno-

rant Coolie, pocketing his dollars for writing down stories, the least obnoxious part of which was that they were ungrammatical. It was plain upon the face of some of these documents that the writer had supplied not only the ink but the *fringe*, perhaps, indeed, the whole of the matter. One of these epistles now lies before me, and is so open a piece of Black and Coolie hypocrisy, yet so plausible, that I transcribe it, spelling, punctuation, and all.

PETITION.

To the Commissioners of Inquiry: Your Commissioners we give God the Glory, Who pitied the Children of Israel in their house of bondage, and sent Moses for their deliverance. So the same God send you Commissioners to deliver us here from out of the house of bondage. We we[re] brought into this Colony by our planters. From the [year] 1845. By thousand From the land that is ful of Hindoos Superstitions and Mahommedanism in[to] a land of lights as it's called. But we were thrown in pastures like beasts in total darkness by our managers on the estates. they use no means to educate our children. they give us no religious teaching but help to harden us and make us ten times worse by their evil ex imple of Sabbath breaking and more that. And not only so but compeled many of us on Sabbath to do their various works Instead of stopping us from it. And while some of them in the house of God their chinese and Coolie in the fields working. Not many days ago in the month of October 1870 on the New Amsterdam district on a Sabbath morning while the manager in the house of God. Several Coolie and Chinese was in the field working—this is always the case on most of the estates—So Your Commissioners our body and soul both are in suffering circumstance. All this sinfulness going on Because our managers keeps us in darkness. they are few Schools on the estates but useless. Because those whom the managers put to teach our children have no feeling and they will not spend even a half hour good to teache our little ones. And the managers themselves never put a foot there to inquire from the teachers to know how old they are. So the children going to School for many months and years. but they could not tell A from B.—they make laws to punish us when we absent from their services —But no one takes notice of our souls matters. O what will be the results in the day of Judgment. when the many thousand of the Asiatic shall arise up against those that holds the light of the Gospel from them. Whilst our Lord say Go ye and preach the Gospel and to all nations

Why our managers and others should keep it back—In conclusion your Commissioners. When you return to England we beg you in Christ's stead to mention about our miseries especially concerning the many thousand perishing souls—the Lord be with you—

Your Commissioners
(Signed)
Your Obedient Servant

I shall not give the names of these earnest Protestants. The appeal to Christian sympathies in this paper is shamelessly dishonest; yet, from all one knows, is there not likely to be both truth and acuteness in some of the suggestive reflections on the religious inconsistencies of Englishmen? I should like to take some of those who decry the efficiency of missionary work among the heathen to the spot where, side by side with the zealous teachings and pure living of the evangelists, are openly enacted the vicious and unjust practices of men who go by the name of Christians.

Our poor friends who propounded this remonstrance to "Your Commissioners" may themselves have been guilty of cant and deceit therein; yet its rough sentences contain matter worth pondering by Christian and unchristian Britons.

The reference in this document to the schools is not quite correct. Where schools exist—namely, on such places as Schoon Ord and the Messrs. Ewing's estates of Better Hope, Vryhied's Lust, &c.—the managers take great interest in them. The Commissioners report the existence on the estates of a very small number of schools. Great difficulty is alleged to occur in enforcing attendance. In the school at

Better Hope I found a neat-looking coloured mistress engaged with about fifteen children of various shades and sizes. She told me that when they would attend they did very well. Their copy-books bore comparison with those of many a home school, though I fear they did not take away much from such elaborate maxims as I found one little fellow writing: "A censorious disposition is a disadvantage to its owner" —a hint, perhaps, that when he grew up he was not to be sinfully unreasonable in criticising the hospital supplies.

Here is another brief letter, selected out of many:—

TO GEO. WM. DES VOEUX ESQ. &C.

Sir, I have to Inform you that the treatment I reçeive in the Hospital of Plantation —— is this I went in the sick house about this three weeks ago and now last night the China nurse beat me very much and I then tell it to the head sick nurse he said that he do not care nothing about it that the China nurse should have beat me then more After then he took the light and burn[t] my head in the morning I went and complain to the manager He said to me he do not care one —— about the matter and that If the nurse did even kill me he is nothing to do with my affair. I therefore think hard of this matter to see that If any person ill use me and I complain to my employer and then no satisfaction give to me

I am Your
Obedient servant

his
DOS MAHOMMED X
mark

Every one will be sensible of the ignorantly clever way in which Dos Mahommed manages to mingle his facts and arguments together; the burning with the candle, and the dramatic addition of the manager's oath, all cunningly contrived to add probability to

his story. I soon found out that most of the Coolies were clever enough to utilise the swearing propensities of my countrymen, for the purpose of enhancing the effects of their narrations, and that they were shrewdly intimate with the forms and occasions of this national weakness.

One more to myself, which any one acquainted with the people will recognise to be in true African-Creole style:—

My Dear Sir,

Although matters are now to the Height whether to hold or break. Yet still we are in no way better treated even now the judges are on their seat trying to put down wrong and robbery. Who are we now to make our complaints to but to you. You who stands up in our behalf. To complain to the Magistrates where is the Justice we will receive at his hands on the Bench when he is a faithful friend and a Bottle Companion to the very Manager we have a complaint against for bad treatment and keeping our wages. To complain to the sub-immigration agent there we are again. When we see him receiving such Hospitality to any amount in *Hennessy's* or *Renault's* very best. We say then we have but one resource to resort to, and that is in the Magistrate's Clerk who we think will file our charges and complaints right and set them before the Magistrate, but Oh lack-a-day! we are deeper down in the ditch than ever when it turns out that the very Manager we are then charging with bad treatment to us is son-in-law to the Magistrates Clerk. The complaints will be laid aside or hid away, and we will be told to come to-morrow, and when to-morrow comes, not to-day Come next week, and so we are put off untill the case is lost into oblivion for Ever. How then can we Get our rights up here when—things are in this state. At plantation —— —— Coast.

Hoping you will lay this in Evedience before the three judges,

I remain

Your

Ob Servants

three of Villagers & four Coolie immigrants.

Since I have wrote I have heard that the same practice is carried on at the West Coast, the Managers entertains the Magistrates, and the Doctors freely gives them plenty to eat and drink, so that everything must be in the Managers favour look well to these true statements my dear good sir, don't think them anything like lies or from a malicious feeling but they

are written to shew you and others who have not the opportunity to see and know what things are going on between Managers, Magistrates, and Doctors. Could you but only transform yourself into a bird with wings and fly up here you will then see our just cause of complaint, in mercy to us try and do us some Good. I think you will see at your door about a hundred of us on Monday By the Train.

I believe I did see a good many on Monday by the train, but fortunately I was not called upon to transform myself into a bird with wings, and fly up to the spot in question.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PENAL SETTLEMENT.

THE only remaining condition of the Coolie as yet unpictured by me is his penal life. For offences against the Immigration Ordinances he is—under a new system—committed not to gaol, but to a district reformatory. On entering this, tasks are assigned to him proportioned to the number of days for which he has been committed. These tasks he must complete before he is liberated, so that it is quite possible a man committed for fourteen days may be six weeks in prison. The tasks are assigned on the adjacent estates, to which the prisoners are taken in gangs by the prison superintendents. I need not again describe this sort of hard labour. The *criminals*, as distinguished from the offending labourers, are consigned to Georgetown Gaol if imprisoned but a short time, and if convicted of serious offences to the penal settlement on the Massaruni, a branch of the Essequibo. This, by the courtesy of the planters' committee, which I desire hereby to acknowledge with much gratitude, I had an opportunity of seeing a few days before I left the colony. A hint thrown out at

one of the parting dinners given to the two advocates was at once taken up by my oft-mentioned friend, the Inspector-General of Police. It is impossible to limit his abilities: for drilling a regiment, keeping a whole country in subjection, discovering a murder, catching a thief, playing a game of billiards or whist, shooting a plover, inventing new "drinks" or scientifically concocting old ones, conceiving and purveying a dinner, and, finally, doing it the utmost justice, commend me to my friend, the aforesaid "General." In twenty-four hours, the planters' committee having confided the arrangements to his hands, he had a steamer ready for us handsomely stocked with——well, I would rather not schedule the variety and extent of our resources; and at five o'clock in the morning, Mr. Cowie, an English officer from the garrison, the "General," and myself, started in luxurious fashion for Massaruni, the "penal settlement." Slowly we steamed along the low shore of the West Coast for twenty miles, through the uncomfortable swell, to where the broad, smooth estuary of the Essequibo opened its mouth towards us, with two or three islands dotting the glassy surface. So broad and smooth the river, with the banks so low, one almost fancied it was flowing down in and among the graceful trees that reared their light, feathery heads against the pure sky. The sun was fierce enough as we panted along on the wide, silent, unpeopled water, rarely seeing a bird, only now and then catching glimpses of Negro huts, or Buck stations, on the low, yellow sands; steaming sometimes close to the shore, for the river is deep, and detecting

on the banks splendid specimens of ferns and other plants. Thus we throbbed along in the quivering air, some thirty miles, till at length we found timber-ships loading for England, and then an island at a fork in the river, where the Massaruni sleepily joins the larger stream. In the distance we had seen a blue line of hills, perhaps one or two hundred feet high, a refreshing variation in the flat scenery! As we turned into the Massaruni river, we could discern a slight elevation, which may pass for a hill in these regions; on it some buildings with a flag flying at the staff. This was the Penal Settlement, an island chosen for its conformation as a place at once secure and healthy, used, indeed, by some of the "first families" in the days of the then vivacious and hospitable governor, Captain Kerr—since, alas! deceased—as a sanatorium. Hither, once a month, certain Commissioners came in their steamer, not seldom, with some good company, to make a disagreeable business pleasant. We were soon alongside the wharf, a sergeant bringing down a file of policemen to guard against surprise, and Captain Kerr there himself, pistol in belt, to bid us welcome. Any Christian was welcome to the solitary family in that sequestered place. I was cheered by a sight of the first rock I had seen in the colony, from which the convicts were quarrying granite. When we had walked up the only incline available within fifty miles of Georgetown, we found ourselves at the end of cool avenues of fine mahogany trees, under and about which was the green grass; and puffing up an

indifferent hill, which absurdly tested our unaccustomed legs, we reached the large house devoted to the Governor of the colony and the Commissioners when they visit the island. It is a good house, but so rarely occupied as to be in bad order. Behind it were the strong stone walls of the gaol, an extensive and well-built fortification. Further on were police buildings and the residences of the governor and the chaplain. Captain Kerr was not only a brave and determined officer, but a man of taste and a botanist. Visitors to Kew may see some of the specimens of his discoveries in the woods of Guiana. The island exhibited his taste. Every advantage was taken of the position to beautify it with the plants of the colony; while, at the burying-ground, he had, with the assistance of neat-handed Chinese convicts, laid out an elaborate and ingenious garden, terraced and ornamented with cement vases and walls, where grew many species of the English rose and other home flowers. In some instances the loving attention of the exile was shown by the care with which some English plants peculiarly open to the ravages of ants were tended, the legs of the stands that supported them being placed in jars kept constantly filled with water. Sad as were the memorials about and above which these flowers flourished, their home-like beauty seemed to quicken one's longings and hopes for the land of which they told.

In the evening there was a service in the chapel of the gaol. I slipped into the governor's pew, and there, below and beside me, were the collected

criminals of British Guiana—some murderers in fact, though not in law, some thieves, some clever and daring cheats, and some ringleaders in estates' riots, sent here to expiate their two or three hours' vicious excitement by a seven years' punishment. All in loose canvas suits, with their numbers printed on the back. Two or three whites, dark Negroes and Quadroons, little Coolies, with their quick, black eyes darting about in uneasy resentment, or the stolid and repulsive features of "the heathen Chinee," certainly of the Bret Harte stamp. A curious little chapel it was, to which the incumbent and ingenious convicts had attempted to give some sort of ornament; his own part of it, by the way, being of a ritualistic character, too tawdry to be worth his while in that situation. Some of the men—there are no women—followed the prayers and joined in the singing; most remained stolidly impassive. I will not criticise the service further than to say that it seems to me a painful thing if the minister of such a congregation cannot speak to them from his own heart some words of humane and earnest appeal, and deems it consistent with his duty to resort to the tame expedient of reading from a book a children's paraphrase of Hebrew history, done in the inert and stupid style assumed by too many of the pedants who undertake to dilute the Bible for infant minds. Yet the service was impressive, when one looked round on the hundred or so of unhappy criminals, many of whom seemed to be interested in its simple celebration.

The buildings resembled in most particulars those

of an English gaol; the long carefully-cleaned corridors, the doors piercing the thick walls, and leading into small cells, to occupy which in that climate must be a penalty indeed. All except the most refractory are, however, taken out during the day, and employed in various ways about the island. Sometimes they escape, but they cannot go far through the trackless woods, and are brought back by the Indians. They have before now risen and attacked their gaolers, the deceased governor once being nearly killed in a sudden assault. It must have been altogether a melancholy place for such a man to live in. I wonder whether it was that which had induced in him and his family so earnest an affection for flowers, and birds, and animals, as some relief from the sickening monotony of an ever-present crime, and danger, and loneliness?

After a twelve hours' residence, we bid adieu to the pleasantest-looking place in Guiana, our engines pulsating, as we went, with strange and prolonged distinctness, over the silent water.

Three or four days after, Mr. Cowie and I were prepared for a longer and more welcome journey. I am bound to say that twelve weeks or so of Demerara life had amply satisfied my curiosity and tested my physical patience. Its flat and monotonous landscape, its hot and humid air, its warm waterspouts, its trenches simmering in the tropic sun, its mosquitoes, born, bred, and feeding with relentless and multiplied persistency, its prickly heat making your bath a purgatory, your nights a martyrdom, its land-breeze like the warm breath of steam-engines, its sea-breeze

like the baneful activity of a furnace, its fever days and nights, and its everlasting sugar—had reduced my temper to a state which I should not care just now to analyse. Yet how much there was to keep you up! The untiring hospitality, the genial kindliness of the ladies, the honest *bonhommie* of the other sex; the dinners, with their coaxing appeals to a debilitated British appetite, their ducklings and peas, their roast beef and plum pudding, their American cod-fish, English salmon, peaches, apples, and pears, and all the delicacies of the latest ice-ship; the "crab-backs," unknown dainty to any but a Demerarian, worth the voyage alone to taste; the "iguana," that tender and delicious lizard, whose too susceptible skin when alive is converted into an essence when dead such as rarely challenges a mortal mouth; the milk punch, the chilled champagnes, the frothing swizzles—who, with such a *menu* before him, could cast an envious reflection on the comparatively indifferent ills of that shocking habitat of his fellow-beings? As I stood in the late evening, leaning over the taffrail of the *Mersey*, after many kind "good-byes" from kindly lips, and through the dim, hot night just traced the uneventful outlines of Georgetown, left by me for ever I now trust and then fondly hoped; as I felt the feverish glow of its wind and the heavy oppression of its air; as I thought of its hospitality, and recalled its tortures and its dangers—I was reminded vividly of an epigram attributed to one of the Canadian Commissioners who, not long ago, visited the same shore: "The motto of this place seems to be, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.*"

PART II.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COLONIAL EMPLOYER.

I NOW purpose to review the Coolie immigration system of British Guiana, as its outlines have been clearly ascertained by the late inquiry. Unquestionably no such authoritative and complete investigation of the system in British Colonies has yet been made; while the increasing tendency to resort to the crowded territories of India and China, on the part both of our colonists and of the United States, in order to supply the deficiencies of labour, opens up in the future possibilities so vague, so vast, so portentous, that this latest and most authentic contribution to the question must have an intense interest for every statesmanlike and Christian philanthropist.

There are two methods of Coolie immigration, which, arising out of different circumstances, are conducted under differing conditions, and need to

be discussed independently of each other. One I may term *Natural Immigration*, the other *Artificial Immigration*.

The natural immigration is such an immigration as has taken place into California and other parts of the United States, and into Australia, whither, prompted by the greed for gold or the energy of trade, vast numbers of persons have, at their own expense, and under little if any supervision, transferred themselves, of their own free will, to a promising field of labour. Such immigration as this can only arise out of some unusual circumstances, such as a discovery of gold or the existence of a sudden and extensive demand for labour in some place conveniently near to the labourer. It may, nevertheless, call for very serious attention on the part of the legislator. Its incidents and results, if it is a movement of any importance, may give rise to grave social difficulties. The transport of weak and ignorant people to a strange land, the representations by which they are induced to leave their own country, the provisions for their safe and healthy transit, the arrangement for their reception on arrival, their distribution through their adopted country, the proportion of the sexes, their relations to the people among whom they are to live, must all excite in any government concerned the most anxious solicitude. Such are the problems now agitating the United States.

But if natural immigration forces itself upon the attention of the statesman and the philanthropist, an artificial system of immigration—conducted by an

elaborate machinery and involving relations and duties of a special and anomalous kind—cannot but cause the gravest anxiety to any government on which rests the responsibility of its working. In this case the position of the relative parties is reversed. Instead of the immigrant seeking the employer, the employer seeks the immigrant; instead of voluntary and independent transportation, the immigrant is recruited before he leaves his native land, has bound himself to go to the place designated by the contractor, is transported at the expense of the employer, and cannot on landing exercise any discretion as to the nature and locality of his labour. This system on the face of it demands more careful investigation and is more exposed to criticism than the natural immigration first alluded to. In considering a system so anomalous, we are bound to ask whether it is necessary? What ends are answered by it that cannot be attained in any other way? And whether the attainment of these ends counterbalances any inherent evils which may be discovered in it? Such are the questions to which the succeeding chapters are designed to supply the materials for the reader to answer.

I have already sufficiently described the social, political, and physical circumstances of an immigrant in British Guiana to enable the reader to apprehend the issues hereinafter raised. Politically, we have ascertained, the Coolie is *nil;* he has no voice, nor the shadow of a voice, in the government of British Guiana. Socially he is not only a labourer, he is a bondsman—not using the word in an invidious

sense—he is not free to come and go, to work and rest, as he pleases.

Now there are several points of special interest arising out of the system, the natural but not most convenient order of which would be as follows, but which I shall arrange differently:—

1. There is the original contract, the parties to it, and the method of making it.

2. There is the transfer to the seat of labour.

3. There are the laws at the seat of labour.

4. There is the machinery for enforcing these checks and sanctions.

5. There is the condition of the Coolie in his indentureship—1; in relation to himself; 2, in his relation to his masters.

Before detailing and criticising the arrangements for collecting Coolies in India, I ought to indicate with precision who are *the parties* that set the vast machinery of immigration in motion. The very able chapter of the late Report, in which the Commissioners review the history of immigration to British Guiana, will be found at length in the Appendix.* Here it needs only to be said that from the time of the apprenticeship which succeeded the abolition of slavery, the energetic planting community in the colony exhausted its arts in attempting to introduce substitutes for those labourers whom freedom and indolence had withdrawn from the market. Africans, Barbadians, Portuguese, Chinese, Coolies, were successively and alternately tried, under arrangements

* Appendix C.

prescribed, varied, and improved from time to time by pressure from the Colonial Office. From the outset there was* "a struggle between the colony and the Home Government as to the conditions upon which an immigration was to be conducted, and the manner in which the scale of it was to be fixed from year to year. With the immigration question was mixed up, to the great hindrance of a speedy settlement, the inveterate colonial controversy about the renewal of the Civil List. The object of the Home Government at this time was to secure that the amount to be expended on immigration should be regulated by the Governor, before whom the interests of all classes were on an equal footing, rather than by the Combined Court, a quasi-representative body, which reflects only the views of the landed proprietors or planters. It was desired by this means to retain in the hands of the Governor the power of at any time putting a complete stop to immigration, in case any conditions thought necessary to secure the welfare of the immigrant should not be complied with: in particular, the maximum number to be introduced in any one year, and the ports from which immigration was to be allowed, were reserved as points in the discretion of the Governor. The efforts of the colonists were directed in part against this governmental control of the expenditure, but even more strenuously to obtain immigration without limit as to the places from which the immigrants should come. Africa was still the field from which most was expected; and

* Report, &c., ¶ 89, p. 38.

India began to assume the first place only when it was found that the Home Government was unalterably determined not to allow its efforts to suppress the slave trade to be neutralised by permitting labourers to be recruited upon African soil."

This struggle as to "the conditions on which such an immigration should be conducted," has existed and ever will continue between the planters, eager for the means of acquiring wealth, and the British Government, not unmindful, let us hope, of the importance of encouraging enterprise in any part of the British dominions, yet, as a powerful and comparatively impartial outsider, bound to see that justice shall be done to those who are the instruments of profit. It is the intervention of this supreme authority in the Coolie immigration to the British colonies which renders the system unique; and which, moreover, on its present terms, is the only possible basis whereon any wise and philanthropic patriot would admit that immigration should continue. It is by this power alone that supply can be judiciously regulated to demand, or provisions be enforced for the safety and comfort of the labourer.

How far at present this supreme authority may be efficiently doing its work will probably appear to the reader of these chapters to be a question. In some colonies, by the help of efficient administrators—as in the case of Sir Peter Grant, at Jamaica, and Mr. Arthur Gordon, at Trinidad—the Colonial Office has probably been able to bring the system into reasonable approximation to soundness. In Guiana, the wealthiest

of all the West Indian colonies, with a constitution which confers considerable power on the planters, there has been more difficulty in moulding the system into a satisfactory shape. Mr. Beaumont, lately Chief Justice of British Guiana and a member of its Government, very neatly describes the situation: "If the planters cannot dispense with the system of government (in the colony), they can at any time bring its machinery to a dead lock. And as the Governor must keep things quiet in Downing Street, the oligarchy must keep things quiet in Parliament, and the Colonial Minister must satisfy the West India Committee, the result is that fusion of forces, practically irresponsible, which has been so well described as 'despotism tempered by sugar.'" That there is too much truth in all this is shown by the results of the recent investigation. The Immigration Ordinance of 1864 alone is an evidence, were any needed, of lamentably perfunctory criticism at the Colonial Office.

However, it is clear that the persons immediately interested in Coolie immigration are the planters, and it would seem to a superficial observer that on them ought the entire expenses of the system to fall. But in British Guiana it is held that the whole community is a gainer by the results of immigration. The movement is therefore conducted by the Colonial Executive, on behalf, theoretically, not of any class, but of the whole community; and its expenses are met by a general contribution in the following rather complicated manner:*—"An aggregate total is formed by

* Report, &c., ¶ 109, p. 43.

adding the expenses of administration, that is, of the Immigration Office in the colony and the agencies abroad; of recruiting with advances for transport and maintenance of the emigrants up to the time of embarkation; of passage money; of medical care and sustenance at sea; the costs of return passage, claimed by those who have been ten years in the colony; and a sum representing the amount of bounties paid by planters to immigrants entitled to such back passages, if they are willing to postpone their return, and enter upon another five years' term of service; this last item is merely credited to the expense side of the account, and debited *per contra*, so as to swell the total on each side. One-third of this total—that is, one-third of the expenses of immigration proper, plus one-third of this last paper item—is defrayed out of the general revenue; another sum, consisting of the duties levied on estates' supplies, has hitherto been handed over by the colony to the fund, and considered as a part of the planters' contribution; the rest is paid by them in the form of a contract duty on allotments, which was at first fixed at $50 for Indians, and $80 for Chinese, and intended originally to cover the cost in each case of the passage money. To this is added certain special duties on re-indentures, which have varied from time to time, and in fact have been levied in most years of late to cover deficiencies on the planters' side of the account, as it was found to be falling into arrear; and which have, since last year, become a permanent feature in the account.

"There is also an insignificant sum levied from Coolies, by way of fees for replacing lost certificates, and for the registration of marriages. Lastly, there is the *per contra* entry of bounty money paid by planters to immigrants above noticed, which is entered merely as a matter of account, but with the result of increasing considerably the amount of the colonial subsidy."

In addition to its third and the amount re-credited to the planters for the re-indenture money, which I think a very questionable piece of financial fairness, the colony incidentally makes a further ascertainable contribution of $65,985.31 for the expenses of the Medical Inspector of Estates' Hospitals, repairs to the Immigration Office and Coolie district gaols, besides the additional burthen of maintaining the large police force necessitated by the immigration. I have already shown how that "one section of the community," which, say the Commissioners, is the wealthiest and most powerful, and, moreover, which, in fact, absorbs all the representative element in the government, "regulates the taxation." It imposes on necessaries of life a heavy duty, partly, no doubt, because this is the only way open in such a community to a financial secretary, of distributing the burthens of government over all classes, unless, indeed, a graduated poll-tax were resorted to. Hence, between his actual contribution to the immigration and the unequal incidence of the taxation on the planter and himself, the poorer colonial tax-payer may well grumble that so much of the colonial success is due to his unwilling contribu-

tions. The Commissioners have pointed out with some force that so long as the extension of cultivation keeps pace with the immigration, that extension —which means extension of the capital which employs labour—is advantageous to the general community. They point out also that its contribution to the immigration, and the consequent recognition of its interest in the matter, gives the community a control of the movement which the imposition of the whole cost upon the planters might seriously affect. But on what ground is it possible to defend a financial system framed by the planting interest, in which exaggerated contributions are levied on the people for the maintenance of the Coolie system and for general purposes, while that interest reduces its contributions to the exchequer, both for the cost of the system by which it flourishes and for its own importations? It seems to me this is making the rest of the colony express its gratitude for the favour of a governing class with a vengeance.

The Commissioners acknowledgedly speak on this matter with reserve. The reasons above given are far from conclusive. When a colony was dragged down to the lowest depths, and almost all hope appeared to have died out of it, it may have been a legitimate economic move to levy from its people generally the means of introducing a new element which was calculated to change the features of things. But when once that has been done, and those primarily benefited have begun to enrich themselves by the use of the new agent, are the people properly called upon to

contribute any longer? Immigration has ceased to be a question of life or no life; it is now an established system; the colony is prosperous; and an artificial demand for increased numbers is kept up by artificial, it may be unbased, expansion. This expansion speculatively or carelessly continued might lead to a crisis and to most deplorable consequences. It is clear that the temptation to speculative planting will be greater under the present plan than if the whole of the expense were imposed on the planters. Nay, it may be asked, in this latter arrangement should we not have one pledge of a more careful selection in India, and of greater care of the emigrant in Demerara? Mr. Oliver at the head of one of the greatest planting houses in the colony, owners of estates, agents of absentees, merchants, shippers—declared on oath before the Commission that the general profits of the planters during the last three years have not reached *three per cent. per annum on the capital employed.* These years have been the most signally successful years of the after-slavery sugar production, and in my belief the statement cannot be proved: but it is needless to say that, if it be true, not another Coolie should be permitted to leave the shores of India for British Guiana until the sugar interest is in a more satisfactory condition. With an artificial forcing system, with increasing supplies of labour, with vast changes in machinery, and an enormous expenditure, if this is the net result, will it be safe to count upon a good future for the Coolie? An explanation of this extraordinary statement—one preg-

nant with the gravest possibilities should be at once demanded. To stay, or at all events to reduce, the chances of such "unhealthy forcing," as the Commissioners term it, the most obvious plan is to lay the cost of immigration proper on the planters, leaving to the colony the still ample burthen of maintaining order and good government in the anomalous state of society created by it.

It appears, then, that the agents in India are agents, not of any section, but of the whole community of British Guiana, which assumes theoretically the responsibility of its agents' acts; that, in fact, however, the greater part of that community having no representative whatever in the government, this agency is, in reality, an agency only of the planters, and incidentally of the English Government. Having considered the parties, we come to the original contract in India, and the method of making it.

I have said that artificial immigration arises out of the necessities of the employer. He must look out his man, and offer sufficient inducements to lure him away from home and friends to a strange land and an unknown fortune. The government of the country in which this search is pursued has very much to say about it. Its duty clearly is to see that in this delicate operation its subject is not cajoled, or misled as to the nature of his contract, its terms, its sanctions, or the conditions of the field on which it is to be executed. For here is an agent going in and out among its population, seeking to withdraw them for years from its protection. The Chinese Government

recognised this duty, and made the emigration of its people a subject of treaty. The Indian Government, in a similar way, of course subject to the Imperial Government, has also accepted the responsibility of keeping a rein on the movement. For the present, the impracticable conditions imposed by the Chinese have virtually stopped Chinese immigration to the West Indies—one condition being viewed by the planters as of crucial hardship, namely, that of paying the cost of the return passage at the end of five years. The planters have calculated that with the expenses of agencies, of bounties to the recruits, of passage and temporary keep, of hospitals, and so forth—they cannot, in five years, recoup themselves sufficiently out of the average labourer. This is specially the case in British Guiana, where acclimatisation both of Chinese and Coolies is a protracted operation. Discarding the Chinese emigration, and confining the view to Coolie immigration from India, it at once appears that the British Government and people are immediately interested *and responsible* in every branch of the Coolie system. The transference is of our own subjects from one part of our dominions to the other —as much so as if we were to permit English farmers to indenture Irish people in thousands, and use them as Coolies. We cannot escape responsibility in supervising the initiation of the contract, any more than in superintending its performance. Both take place within our own jurisdiction, and with our own subjects.

CHAPTER XV.

IMMIGRATION ORGANISATION IN INDIA AND BRITISH GUIANA.

FROM the account of the origin and progress of the immigration into British Guiana given in the Commissioners' Report,* it will be seen that as early as 1838 a ship-load of immigrants was introduced into Demerara from Calcutta. From that time onwards the luckless planters, as they found their crops dwindling, their emancipated blacks shirking all labour, and bankruptcy staring them in the face, looked longingly towards those exhaustless Asiatic sources of labour-supply—China and India. Portuguese had been introduced in large numbers on the failure of the vine in Madeira, but the "mortality was appalling to the community that had invited them." Barbadians and free Africans were tried without success. Up to 1845-6 so much as £378,830 had been expended by the colony in immigration efforts with hardly any good results, and with an amount of suffering to the poor creatures concerned

* See Appendix C.

which it were better now to bury from human memory.

The Commissioners, referring to the time from which the prosperity of the colony dates, have remarked upon two points of differing but interesting significance. "It is a singular fact, well worthy the notice of economists, that the fall of the old proprietary, and the consequent transmutation of colonial agriculture into a business entirely commercial and speculative, by the loss of the traditional sentiment which attaches to old family estates, was contemporaneous with the first signs of recuperative energy in the sugar industry. Mr. Kelly dates in 1848 the first pause in its downward career; in 1851—the two dates just covering the transition period in question—the first symptoms of its revival. One cause of the revival was the timely and judicious assistance at this time voted by Parliament to the West India interest. Of the sums permitted to be raised under Parliament on guarantee, £250,000 was the share apportioned to British Guiana, and it was decided by the Colonial Government to expend £50,000 of this upon a railway, and the rest in reviving the East Indian immigration."

This latter point is worthy the special attention of those who look upon our colonies as a useless appendage or an unendurable burthen. The timely and natural aid given by a government then conscious of imperial duties, as it was animated by imperial pride —two feelings which of late seem to have been subject to the anæsthetic of a false political economy—while it did not rob the British tax-payer of a solitary farthing,

has been over and over again handsomely reciprocated by British Guiana. While a Financial Reform Association—so called—by statistics unfairly used, by uncandid representations of the expense that his affections cost him, excites the animosity of the British tax-payer against his natural brethren of the present, his most hopeful allies of the future, let me ask him to consider for a moment the following facts. A rough estimate has been made of the amount of duties levied on the produce of British Guiana imported into Great Britain, under the fiscal regulations of the Home Government, even at the reduced rates of duties in 1866. These are—

On 90,000 hhds. sugar	£676,000
30,000 puns. rum	1,769,000
15,000 casks molasses	26,200
	£2,471,200*

subject to deductions for what may be re-exported from Great Britain. In 1861 the colony cost the British Government £40,000; and yet in face of the above figures "financial reformers" will argue that the connection of such a colony is not worth the cost of preserving, that we were being robbed to pay for people four thousand miles off. While they print an elaborate pamphlet to show what duties are levied in the colony on British manufactures, and by publication protest against the injustice of it they say nothing whatever of the levy of duty on British Guianian sugars and rum by the Home Government! In addition to the English shipping and labour employed

* British Guiana Directory, 1870.

and benefited by this great trade, there is the corresponding export from Great Britain by and on behalf of the British Guianian houses. In 1861 the average annual consumption of British goods amounted to the sum of £5 6*s.* 8*d.* per head. In 1864 the sum per head was £5 11*s.** This by the way.

Through the history of the course of legislation in India and British Guiana I do not propose to carry the reader. It will be sufficient to review the arrangements by which at this time Indians are converted into immigrants.

This legislation was in 1864 embodied—principally by the great industry, ability, and experience of Mr. James Crosby, the Immigration Agent-General, and every way as honourable and upright an officer as the colony contains—in an ordinance designated "Number 4 of 1864." I do not speak of the ordinance with as much unmixed admiration as of its compiler; for not only was it rather complicated, verbose, and untechnical in its original draft, but, its author alleges, was still more violently distorted from concinnity by the treatment it endured at the hands of the legislature. By a singular omission the head of the Immigration Department is not a member of the Court of Policy. When one considers the dominance given in that body to one interest, this omission is, until it is rectified, clearly fatal to any claim that may be advanced by the planters to the sympathies of the British Government or British public. Even this would afford but a limited redress of the in-

* British Guiana Directory, 1870.

equality, but it would at least give to some representative of the Coolie's rights a voice in the legislation that concerns him. The exceedingly earnest language of the Commissioners on this point will need to be kept in view by those to whom it is addressed, and those who have pledged themselves to vindicate the Coolie's interests.

"The mishaps which have attended the work of legislation in immigration matters, of which many clauses in the Acts of 1864 and 1868 are conspicuous monuments, might all have been averted, and probably would have been, if the official whose duty it was to carry them into execution had had a voice in the discussions which preceded their enactment. It appears likely that legislation will still be necessary to remove the more flagrant of the anomalies which exist, if not to introduce novel provisions for the improvement of the system; but the experience of past legislation would leave us hopeless of any approximation to completeness in the work, if it were to be conducted in the hap-hazard way of former times. The present Agent-General tells us that he drew the ordinance of 1864; the present Acting Agent-General made the first draft of the ordinance of 1868; but in both cases they refuse to recognise their offspring, ill-treated as it was in their absence by the legislature, without their having any opportunity of explaining it, or of bringing the modifications so effected into harmony with the whole.

"In another respect, we think it expedient that the Immigration Agent-General should have a seat in the

Court of Policy. He would represent in his official capacity the interests of a very large section of the population who are at present necessarily excluded from direct representation in the legislature. The weakest side of the constitution of British Guiana is confessed to be the exclusiveness by which direct representation is confined to one interest, the most powerful in the colony, although certainly the most capable; and any small modification which would tend, although indirectly, to diversify the constituent elements ought to be thankfully welcomed, both by the public and the predominant interest itself. There are, as we have endeavoured to show, special reasons in the nature of his work for allowing the Agent-General a large discretionary action before calling in the interposition of the Executive in person. To these we desire to add, that in any future nomination to the office, it will be simply impossible to secure the services of an official qualified to perform its duties so long as his functions are limited, as at present, to the merest routine work, and the expansion into letters of minutes written by the Governor. Such duties might be satisfactorily performed by a head clerk without any particular standing; but this is not all that has to be provided for. Personal qualities of a higher order, though of a kind happily not rare among our fellow-countrymen, are required in the official to whom 50,000 expatriated Asiatics are looking for watchful protection and guidance. Powers also of considerable magnitude must be frankly intrusted to him if he is to have any personal influence for good."

In the consolidated ordinance are provisions for the erection of an Immigration Department, with its Agent-General, sub-immigration agents, clerks, and interpreters in the colony—its Emigration Agents "to superintend the emigration of labourers to the colony from any of the ports of the East Indies, China, or elsewhere," with their staff; and lastly, its Medical Inspector of Estates' Hospitals.

I will briefly review the position and work of these officials. There is the Emigration Agent of the colony in India, with a salary of £1,000 sterling a year, and a capitation allowance of three shillings on immigrants sent by him and arriving in the colony. This latter allowance was granted as an incentive to the agent to send a proper class of people, for undoubtedly before 1862 some of the unhappy creatures shipped by the gentleman who then drew his £1,000 a year were unfit for any good purpose. They died like sheep, or suffered from diseases worse than death. The injustice to the planters was manifest and great.

The Government of India also supervises the emigration of its subjects, and curiously enough it came out before the Commission that the capitation grant was contrary to the Indian Act.* The Commissioners say (par. 202): "We presume from this that the Government of India is no more aware that the Emigration Agent is still paid by capitation allowance, in addition to his salary, than the Immigration Agent-General in the colony was found to be of the pro-

* 13 of 1864, s. 12.

visions in the Act against it!" However, it seems to have had the effect of stopping the careless supply of inefficient Coolies. A Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta is appointed to perform on behalf of his government the work which his name implies. As to the co-operation between the Indian and Colonial officials, Mr. Crosby, in reply to a question, "Have you had any correspondence with the Protector of Emigrants?" said, "None other than merely a letter announcing 'I have sent such and such papers.' When I have made any comments upon any circumstances I have never had the gratification of receiving any reply. I have frequently hinted at matters which I have thought might be improved, but he has never condescended to reply."

—Worse than the man who sends you an insolent answer—which at least admits you to be worth his indignation—is the man who never condescends to reply. He stands upon a rock, and is as imperturbable to busy reformers as his basis. But I had scarcely thought it possible that in this age, when the rigid insolence of place has had its back so thoroughly broken, there existed even among the fossil remains of permanent officialism a specimen of the civil servant who never condescends to reply. Now that the Secretary of State for India has had his attention drawn to this singular officer, he may perhaps find room for him among the curiosities of the India Museum.—

It will be seen at once how important both to the commercial interests of the planter and the humane

interest of the philanthropist is the part to be played in the Coolie system by the emigration staff in India. Unwise selection of people, who are either of weak frames, sufferers from disease, or not fitted for agricultural labour, will not only prove a loss to the employer, but an increase of sorrow to themselves. Among the Chinese immigrants I found people who had been doctors, schoolmasters, and the like, and Mr. Crosby stated that on inquiry he had found the immigrants from China to have belonged to as many as one hundred and fifty occupations—one returning himself as "a professed gambler." The Commissioners examined personally some immigrants by a ship called the *Medea*, with this result:—"Out of *thirty* adult immigrants, only *thirteen* were agricultural labourers, who, with one lime-burner, one cowherd, three peons, and a sweeper, made the list of those accustomed to outdoor labour; the remaining *fourteen* were priests, weavers, scribes, shoemakers, beggars, and so forth. It is to this circumstance that a great deal of the discontent upon estates is due; the immigrants on arrival find they have to do work to which they have never been accustomed; they get disheartened, and soon find their way into the estates' hospitals." *

The effect of vigorous remonstrance by the Demerara authorities has been to induce greater care in the Indian agents in endeavouring to secure a better class of immigrants. But in all fairness the whole of the case in British Guiana, as presented at the

* See Appendix D for a description of the method of passing, and remarks on recruiting.

inquiry, must be reviewed subject to the consideration that a large number of the early inefficient importations still survive. The difficulty of deciding in the case of these poor people whether indolence or feebleness were the real cause of neglect to work, has all along been insuperable to the colonial administration. The Indian agencies have been established as the result of much thought and correspondence on the part of the Colonial Office, the Indian Government, and various Colonial Executives. If any one will take the trouble to consider the number of colonies taking or requiring emigrants, the various agencies, the various laws and their intricacy, he will be convinced that in this single department that office has a task considerably beyond its present ability to perform well. It is an enormous business. I have heard that a sanguine official once expressed in Parliament his admiration of the beauty and perfection of the system of that office; but it is to be feared that while the head of the official ostrich was in the sand, curious and not very reverential spectators were passing their remarks on the scandalous exposure of his body. At all events, it is perfectly certain that very few independent colonists, honestly speaking their mind, would concur in this egregious assumption. The Colonial Office has not the force at its disposal to attend properly to half its business, admitting it to have within its ranks the practical ability or the appropriate colonial representation to regulate it.

The recruiters are engaged and sent out by the *Colonial Emigration Agent*, acting under the Indian Acts 13 of 1864 and 6 of 1869. They are further licensed by the Indian Government official to whom I have before alluded, called the Protector of Immigrants, at Calcutta. The recruiter's license must have been countersigned by the resident magistrate of the district in which he works.*

Their business is to visit the country districts, and represent to the natives the advantages of immigration. What is it that they represent? The planter's answer will be, that whatever the recruiting agent says, the actual contract is there in black and white—such a contract as Lum-a-Yung's in my first chapter—to show the terms on which the immigrant left his native land. But then the indentures with Indians are executed in Demerara. Moreover, on the other hand, the Coolies complained to me frequently that they had been deceived by the agents in India.

I had placed in my hand by an immigrant in Georgetown a sort of advertisement or circular purporting to have issued from the colonial agent, with a statement as to the character of the country, work, and wages, and a promise to the immigrant, if I remember rightly, of land for gardens. This paper I produced before the Commission, and asked the Immigration Agent-General to verify; but he said he had never seen a similar one, and was unaware of its issue. Though there is no reasonable doubt

* Report, &c., ¶ 185.

that the circular was an authentic one, distributed by the recruiters in India, it was quite properly rejected by the Commissioners as not sufficiently verified for their purposes. Such representations are of the utmost consequence, and the colony, through its agent, is directly responsible for them. Exaggerated statements in print, or verbally made by the recruiters, mislead the ignorant Coolies, and lay the basis for that permanent sense of wrong, which makes a resentful labourer, with the danger of converse harshness and oppression in enforcing another view of the contract. The action of these recruiters, therefore, needs careful watching on the part of the Indian Government; and after their work is done, and the Coolie has been separated from them —nay, even up to the time of embarkation—perfect freedom of choice should be insured to the recruits. Better no crop of sweetness than one bred of deceit and discontent.

The temptation to these recruiters, who can hardly be exempt from some of the characteristics of the Hindu, has repeatedly proved too great to be resisted. Persons of poor physique, of the basest moral stain, suffering from leprosy or other diseases, have successfully passed under the supervision of all the persons whom I have mentioned—the recruiter, the magistrate, the colonial agent, Protector of Immigrants, doctors—and have reached Georgetown in a state which proved their disabilities to have been chronic. When this appears, we cannot be sanguine as to the carefulness with which the Coolie's mind is

made to appreciate his contract and its prospects. A very gross case has recently come to light in India—I trust an unusual one; but the fact that a considerable attempt at kidnapping was made by recruiters does not speak well for the Indian agencies.*

So much for the recruiter *per se*. Now as to his authoritative representations. The recruiter takes his people before the resident magistrate of his district to be registered. Copies of the register, stating age, sex, caste, former occupation, and the rate of wages in the colony, are given to the immigrant, and duplicates are forwarded to the colonial agent. "In these certificates the emigrants are almost invariably entered as agriculturists, whether that has been their former occupation or not. Their caste, which appears side by side with this description, directly belies it."† Hence many tears, troubles to managers from incapables, sorrows to the incapables themselves, to whom Spartan drowning or hanging were a better fate than to have contracted to do what they cannot do with the alternative of shot-drill.

A certificate was produced to me by a Coolie, and by me handed to the Commission, with a wages column, in which it was stated that wages in the colony were from ten annas (1*s.* 3*d.*) to two

* In a pamphlet recently printed with the too sensational title "The New Slavery," Mr. Beaumont reprints from the *Madras Times* an account which, if true, proves a state of things simply atrocious and unendurable. See Appendix E.

† Report, &c., ¶ 187, 189.

rupees (4*s.*) per diem for agricultural labour. On a Chinese indenture before me as I write is a note as follows :—

"Resolution of the Governor and Court of Policy of British Guiana—'That the immigrant should be guaranteed full employment, on adequate wages, paid weekly, with a house rent free, with medical attendance, medicine, food, and hospital accommodation when sick; and that it should be explained to them that a man *can earn easily from two to four shillings*, women from one to two shillings, and children eightpence per diem, and that a full supply of food for a man can be bought for eightpence per diem.'" The indenture was made in 1863.

Let us, therefore, take only that of which there is indubitable evidence, namely, that the above statements were made by the recruiting agent. If it should turn out that only a strong man can earn two to four shillings a day, and that one shilling or one and threepence is a fair statement of the usual average pay, and that not earned so *easily*, what remedy would Tan-a-Leung or Achattu have against the government of British Guiana or against his employers? None whatever. When he arrives there he finds himself to be subject to a law which overrides his certificate, and he must either sit down content or—look out for shot-drill. In such a case his only appeal would be to the British people and Government. Let us see Mr. Crosby's opinion upon this point :—

Q. 2500. Might I ask whether you would not

consider that certificate a sort of contract with the immigrants made out of this colony?

A. I consider it was upon this representation that they came to this colony. It is a statement made by the magistrate in India to the immigrant, when he is taken before the magistrate, under Act 16 of 1864, by the recruiter; because this is presented to the Protector of Immigrants on his arrival in Calcutta.

Q. This is the representation made to the immigrant on which he comes here?

A. Yes. Ten annas, I believe, is 1*s.* 3*d.*

Q. In this colony it would not be considered as a contract, because such contracts are rendered invalid by legislation? Is it not so?

A. There is no contract, in fact, made in India with the Indian immigrant.

Q. None acknowledged in this colony?

A. None.

Q. It may be a question whether this is not a contract in India?

A. This is not looked upon as a contract. It is not presented to us. We know nothing about it in point of fact. I believe it to be very seldom that they possess them on their arrival. I dare say many are very careless of them, but some preserve them with great care.

Q. Then in answer to my question whether this could be recognised as a contract in this colony, you would say certainly not?

A. Certainly not.

On the statement in the Chinese indentures the

Commissioners report: "Now, although an able-bodied Negro can earn from three to four shillings by from nine to ten hours of work in the field, it is well known that a Chinaman cannot; moreover, the Negro does not 'easily' earn it, but earns it by a good steady day's work. It is hardly fair to compare the Negro and the Chinaman where heavy field work is required; for the Negro is physically far superior to the class of Chinese who have emigrated to this colony. The Chinese complained that they had been deceived in this respect, for on arrival they found they could not earn the wages they had been led to believe they could." As to the Indian certificates they say: "A more serious matter is the statement of wages inserted in the certificate without note or comment, but required by the Indian Act to be specified as that 'agreed upon between the immigrants and the recruiter.' The rate is entered as from ten annas to two rupees, no difference being made in this particular between the certificates given to males and females. We shall hereafter examine into the rates of wages really earned, and show plainly that the effect of this statement can only be to mislead and deceive those to whom it is made.

"The copies from the registers kept by the Protector and resident magistrates, which are given to the immigrants, and by them considered as a contract, may not indeed be held binding by the colonial law, but are none the less direct pledges of the faith of the community. This is another, and we are sorry to say a still continuing instance of that carelessness

as to the acts of their agents abroad, which we have had occasion to notice in the case of the Chinese. Were it not that we have a confident expectation that the calling public attention to it will cause the immediate stoppage of this abuse, *we could not look forward with any satisfaction to the continuance of immigration from India.*"

Thus it appears that the rates of wages heretofore stated in the certificate—which is *not admitted in the colony to be a contract*, though taken to be so by the Indian Act, but is regarded merely as a representation—are now proved without doubt to be excessive. Yet "the Governor and Court of Policy of British Guiana" authoritatively pledge themselves to ignorant and confiding Coolies to these rates.

Again, a complaint frequently made to me by the immigrants was, that until they arrived in Guiana they had no idea whatever that penal consequences were to result from their breach of contract. No doubt they are cunning and fraudful. They would like to take their bounty money and get their free passage and do no labour; but they ought surely to know that if they wilfully fail the prison is their resource. Why not give them a proper form of contract, epitomising its conditions and honestly informing the recruit of the incidents to which he is subjecting himself? You say: He would not come. Then what right have you to bring him? As for the *land*, which is temptingly held out to innocent, greedy ears, that inducement is acknowledged to be a farce.

The agents, after taking the recruits before a ma-

gistrate, who *vises* the certificate, send them on to the depôt at Calcutta, where they await shipment. Here they are examined by the agent, by the surgeon-superintendent, and depôt surgeon, and passed. The method of passage was the subject of investigation by order of the Demerara Executive in February, 1870, when Dr. Crane, the surgeon-superintendent of the *Sophia Joachin*, stated:*—

"The official inspection took place on Saturday, the 11th September. The people were collected on the ground-floor of the brick buildings. They passed out individually through the back verandah in which Dr. Palmer and myself were sitting at a small table. As each person came to the table he presented his certificate, and a native—I think the 'native doctor' of the British Guiana depôt—inquired of the man his name and father's name, and if they corresponded with the ticket it was handed to Dr. Palmer to sign, who thereupon affixed his signature and handed it to me for my signature, which I declined to attach, as I found it impossible, from the rapidity of the examination, to refer to the notes which I had taken at my previous inspection at the depôt, as to the condition of such individuals as I considered likely to be unfit for embarkation. I then stated that I would afterwards examine the people myself, and compare them and the certificates with my notes, and sign the tickets of those that I approved. Dr. Palmer said emphatically that it would take a great deal of time. I stated that it would not be necessary for him to

* Report, &c., Pars. 196, 197.

remain during such examination. I contented myself, as directed by Dr. Palmer, with stopping such people as manifestly required, in my opinion, a more rigid inspection. When an individual was objected to, and Dr. Palmer and I had concurred that he was not fit for embarkation, the certificate was handed to me to record the fact and the reasons; but while I was engaged in doing so, other people were being rapidly passed without my having any opportunity of noticing them, and in this manner the inspection was continued until finished. I think about two hours were occupied in this examination. I then requested the Baboo to collect the people again for my own official inspection, having no confidence in the examination which had just taken place. While the people were being collected, the Baboo, accompanied with a clerk from the British Guiana depôt, returned, when I was informed by them that there was no time for such an inspection, as the certificates of the people were required immediately for making out the list of immigrants for embarkation. I then said that I would look over the certificates, and select from them the certificates of those of whom I had made notes on my previous inspection. This I did; and out of forty-one of whom I had made notes I found but one-half, of whom I passed fourteen after another inspection. Of these fourteen three died. This concluded the inspection."

Adhar Chander Doss, the surgeon-superintendent of the *Shand*, gives similar testimony:—

"At the time of the embarkation, Dr. Partridge, the

inspecting surgeon of the emigrants, passed them in my presence. On my pointing to some of them as looking very sick, he replied that a little good feeding and sea air would bring them round. On my appointment, no reason had been assigned for my hasty appointment." There is no question that the Indian system is rotten, and that its continuance on its present basis must lead to an early outbreak of public indignation in England. The Government now has its attention officially called to the abuses, and has no excuse for postponing investigation and the immediate adoption of remedial measures.

The nature of these measures is easily indicated. To secure that due notice of the terms of contract is given to the Coolie, the provisions of the ordinance more immediately affecting him should be translated into his language, and read to him by the magistrate at the time of recruiting.

The Protector of Immigrants in Calcutta should be instructed to examine, and perhaps to countersign, the forms of certificates issued to the recruiters; and should also hold at least annual communication with the Immigration Agent of each colony to demand an official statement as to the current rates of wages.*

To sum up, there are three important matters arising out of the Indian organisation :—1. The phy-

* By the Ordinance of 1843 (British Guiana) the Agent-General was called on to prepare once in every quarter, or as often as the Governor should appoint, a statement of the average rate of wages and of the advantages generally afforded by employers in the colony, for transmission to all places which were ports of government emigration, and to all the collecting agents of the colony.—Report, &c., ¶ 115.

sical quality and the occupation of the recruit. 2. The representations actually made to the Coolie by the recruiters. 3. The representations not made to him at the time of making the contract. On all these points the organisation fails, and immediate, trenchant remedy is required.

At the depôt examination particularly the three crucial points above specified should be finally settled. A careful medical inspection of the people by European doctors, representing the colony and the Indian Government, should be made, and the unhealthy be rigidly excluded. *Secondly*, the Protector of Immigrants, or some other trustworthy person, should examine each recruit separately, and explain to him or her, in native language, the outlines of the contract, its sanctions, and the rate of wages. *Thirdly*, the kind of labour and the consequences of a breach of contract should be distinctly made known.

It is possible that fewer immigrants would come, but they would be of a better class, and such a class would materially reduce the necessity of an expensive and minute organisation to watch their interests. The bounty must always prove a great temptation to these people, and if the facts affirmed by the planters are true, the returning immigrants must always be the best recruiters for the colony.

To this question, then, it now becomes the duty of the Home and Indian Governments to give their attention. I for one should not demand or hope for a perfect system, but cannot be content with one so far from tolerable as that which now prevails in India.

From the depôt the immigrants embark, a general register being made out of their names and ages. A surgeon accompanies each vessel, who makes a return of deaths and sickness. During last year sixteen ship-loads of immigrants reached Georgetown from India.

As these ships enter the Demerara river they come under the control of the Immigration Department. This consists of an Immigration Agent-General, with a salary of £1,000 sterling per annum, three sub-agents, one of whom acts as a chief clerk, two clerks, and four interpreters.

Here we resort to the Ordinance. By section 33 it is provided that, on the arrival in Georgetown of an immigrant ship, the Immigration Agent-General and the Health Officer of the port shall forthwith go on board, and ascertain by personal inspection whether the provisions of the "Chinese Passengers Act, 1855," or the "Passengers Act, 1855," have been complied with. They are bound then to "personally muster and carefully inspect the immigrants, and determine when necessary (?) their ages, and more especially the ages of all minor and infant immigrants; and shall separate such as, in their opinion, are not able-bodied labourers, and not physically capable of performing service as agricultural labourers, from those who are," and then report upon the result.

The immigrants are then allotted to estates by the Immigration Agent-General, under the Governor's direction, in proportion to the numbers applied for by the proprietors. They do not see their future master

—they have nothing to say in the matter of their allotment; but, by section 37, the Agent-General is enjoined to take care that children under the age of fifteen years *are not separated from their parents, natural guardians, or protectors, and that relatives are so allotted as to accompany each other*, and *that even friends are not separated unless unavoidable*. The employer, obtaining a receipt for the allotment fees from the Colonial Receiver-General, produces it to the Immigration Agent, who then "orders them to be delivered to the said employer." This is suggestive of the transfer of a flock of sheep, and the whole transaction needs, in every detail, the most delicate, keen, cautious humanity and tact. In no carping spirit let me point this out to every one interested—to the Colonial Office, that it may watch with anxiety the appointments of the officials both in India and the colony; to the planters, that they may, in their own favour, take care that the men selected for this, I may almost say, terribly responsible post shall be conspicuous for integrity and humaneness. For it is a critical point of the system, that any part of it should depend so much upon the character of the individuals who administer it — that according as these are trustworthy or the reverse, it may work well or ill. In Mr. Crosby the system had a man whose character and position were a pledge of his integrity; and his successor should be as earnest a philanthropist, as thorough a gentleman. It may be a question, too, whether he should not be selected from without the colony. Nay, in my opinion it is no question; for no

man in the colony who would accept it is fit for that particular post.

Shall we pause a moment and regard a flock of these strangers as they pass through the streets of Georgetown on the way to their estate? Can we possibly enter into their feelings? Coming from their Asiatic homes, with their notions of Asiatic life, with the very air and mystery of that life hanging about them; simple in their knowledge, though cunning enough in apprehension, they curiously scan the new country to which, with vague and ignorant faith in some good to be won by it, they are voluntarily exiles! I can conceive of nothing more touching to a humane sympathy than this situation, and I am happy to believe that it *does* strike chords in the hearts of some managers, and that in a kindly way efforts are made to mitigate its uncouthness. Mr. Russell, in answer to a question (5388) respecting the acclimatisation of the Coolie, thus describes the treatment of fresh immigrants at Leonora estate:—"I may tell you the rule I have established in respect to Leonora. The people are received in the hospital from the ship; they remain there on full rations for three or four days; they receive a supply of soap and cocoa-nut oil to clean themselves and their clothes; then a good many of them draft themselves out to go and live with people who hail from the same village in India. The balance are allotted houses on the estate, separate houses for themselves. After working for four or five days, chopping grass about the 'buildings,' they are allowed to select their own implement to work with,

whether to become shovelmen or weeders. Those who go to shovel-work, there is a steady old hand goes with them to trim their tools, to get their shovels and cutlasses sharpened, to get the handles made smooth, so that they will not blister their hands, and he looks after them and assists them to learn their work. They are found in full rations; every man gets his rations before he goes out in the morning; they are given to them as to ordinary patients in the hospital. I hand in a bundle of orders on the estate's store for the provisions that are supplied to a gang of twenty-five to twenty-nine—sometimes a few go into the hospital, and then, perhaps, there would be only twenty-five. They go off the list by degrees, and till then food is supplied them like ordinary patients in the hospital. At the end of six weeks I give them notice that so many have to be put on their own hook entirely. The weaker are allowed to continue a week or two longer. Some of them never get off the pension-list; two or three become permanent pensioners, and are always either in the hospital or working about the yards and grounds. My experience in a great number of yards leads me to suppose this to be the best plan. I have dieted on many systems, but I find that the best; it leaves the people in good heart. At the end of the six weeks they get their money to start on their own hook. The best batch I ever had arrived in the month of May, when the water was coming over the back dam: they went on the second day to work, and when the roll was called, at the end of five years,

every one but one answered to his name; that one was a girl who died of pulmonary consumption, which she had when she came. They came by the *Clarendon.*"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE AND ITS CHIEF.

THE Immigration Office in the colony is the next organisation connected with the Coolie system which demands examination. With this the Coolie first comes in contact on landing in the colony, from this primarily takes his orders, to it must from time to time look as his protector, friend, and guide. To the childlike Asiatic it stands *in loco parentis*. One who has not seen something of its working would with difficulty conceive of the responsibility and labour attached to this office. With between forty and fifty thousand wards in the colony, distributed over the one hundred and fifty estates that spread along the sea-shores and river banks for hundreds of miles; with the names, ages, estates, &c., of every one of them to be kept duly registered; with four or five thousand additional per annum arriving to be disembarked, identified, allotted, registered; with semi-annual visits to be paid to every estate, and re-indentures to be granted to immigrants whose time has expired; with constant apparitions of discontented individuals, and occasional irruptions of large bands on strike; with investigations to be made

into complaints either of officials or of the labourers—this office may now be said to be second to none in the colony in amount of the work to be done, as it certainly is second to none in importance.

It is needless here to review the history of the Immigration Department in British Guiana, one probably similar to that of other immigrant-receiving colonies, changed and adapted as it has been from time to time to the exigencies of the service. In the earlier days there was less need of officials, and less for them to do. The Immigration Agent-General was himself able to make half-yearly visits to all the estates in order to re-indenture and receive complaints. At that time his travelling expenses and those of his interpreter were paid by the colony, besides a salary of $3,360 per annum. "An addition was made to the prescribed duty in 1860. The Immigration Agent was to call upon the immigrants whose indentures were within six months of their expiration, to state whether they wished to re-indenture on the same estate or to change their employer, or to commute their service out and out. The competition among employers for acclimatised and skilled labourers now began to make itself felt in the number of transferences of service which the office had to superintend. A complicated system of payments and repayments was necessary, and much extra difficulty was experienced owing to the policy adopted by the office in endeavouring to check these transfers, by which it was permitted to any immigrant to retract his intention of effecting a transfer, although he had pre-

viously obtained the consent of his new employer, at any time before the new indenture of service could be actually signed by the new employer in person. This led to re-indentures and 're-re-indentures' innumerable, and at last the situation became one of intolerable perplexity. Managers not inclined to quarrel openly with each other, quarrelled with the Immigration Agents, who were in this matter merely ministers of their own pleasure; and the Agent-General assures us that the 'demoralisation' among the planters and (as we should hardly have expected) among the immigrants was so great, that it became absolutely necessary to put a stop to commutations altogether. It seems hard to call that demoralisation in the labourers which was, after all, merely a taking of their labour to the best market." *

The real history of the office, and the most interesting, is that of the administration of the present Immigration Agent-General, Mr. Crosby; and if I give a brief *résumé* of this history as related by himself and the Commissioners, some of the extraordinary circumstances connected with it will be found worth the examination. When Mr. Crosby was appointed in 1858, after having been for a short time a stipendiary magistrate in the colony, he was to all intents and purposes a Protector of Immigrants. He visited the estates twice a year; he inspected them, the law conferring on him the right of entry; he entertained complaints; he preferred informations on behalf of immigrants before the magistrates. "I

* Report, &c., ¶ 125.

had in effect almost entire control of the Immigration Department, that is to say, I exercised under all circumstances my own discretion, subject of course to the approbation or disapprobation of the Governor. If a difficulty arose I consulted him, and if occasionally his acquiescence and authority were necessary under the (existing) act, I applied to him; but otherwise I was completely at the head of an important department." Two sub-agents, so called, who practically acted as clerks, were at that time appointed, one of whom, formerly a schoolmaster, has latterly on occasions acted in Mr. Crosby's absence for the Agent-General. As the business of the office increased, and with it the duties of the Agent-General, it became necessary to re-distribute the work. By successive ordinances certain important registers were required to be kept. A register of married heathen immigrants introduced into the colony; a register of marriages of heathen immigrants in the colony, whereof the Agent-General's certificate was made evidence; a register of births and deaths; a register of immigrants sent to the Colonial hospital for treatment; a register of the certificates of the Coolies for industrial service; and copies of returns from public prisons, &c. By these registers Mr. Crosby's object was to be able at any moment to account for any immigrant who had landed in the colony, by showing him to be dead, or on an estate, or in a public institution—a clear matter of necessity where the range of country and seclusion of estates might admit of occurrences irregular or nefarious.

The Agent-General took the superintendence of these important registers, as also of the landing of immigrants and the large amount of business, both concerning planters and Coolies, that required to be attended to at head-quarters. To the sub-agents was now assigned the duty of making the half-yearly visits, and provision was made for the payment of their expenses. They were persons of less individual weight as well as of less official authority than the Immigration Agent-General, a man whose inflexible nature and high sense of duty very likely made him a troublesome visitor. He retained the power of paying extraordinary visits to the estates on special occasions; but the planters took care to clip his wings by witholding any provision for the expenses of travelling — expenses in British Guiana incredibly great—on such special complaints. The Commissioners say: "It was most unfortunate that no definite arrangement was made for defraying the expenses of these extraordinary visits. If it was considered that the increase in the Agent-General's fixed salary was to cover them, we have seen that it was impossible for the Agent-General to understand it in that sense. From time to time a very large increase in the number of complaints has called for a considerable expenditure in these investigations, and it cannot have been expected that the Agent-General should defray out of his own limited salary a charge so heavy and so fluctuating. The result has been, that the investigations in outlying districts have almost always been committed

to the sub-agents, whose travelling expenses were provided for, which is the more to be regretted, inasmuch as it has thrown the Agent-General into the background as a peace-maker, an office (particularly in the case of Asiatics) it is important should be filled by a man of independent authority, and also because it has excluded Mr. Crosby from the exercise of functions for which he seems to have been peculiarly fitted. In three or four instances during the last six years, such investigations have been held by himself in person, and have been more fruitful than others in suggestions for the prevention or settlement of similar complaints in future. That at Bel Air, in 1864, appears to us to be a good model of patient and impartial inquiry." *

Under the Consolidated Immigration Ordinance, the duties and powers of the Agent-General were defined with some precision. He might "at any time enter into and upon any plantation on which immigrants might be employed, and inspect the state and condition and general treatment of the immigrants, and the state and condition of dwelling-houses and hospital accommodation, and inquire into any complaint" of employer against immigrants and conversely, and make a report to the Governor.† He might also prefer a complaint before a magistrate on behalf of an immigrant, when the immigrant was not provided by his employer with sufficient work to enable him to earn a just amount of wages in terms

* Report, ¶ 135, p. 49. † Ordinance 4, 1864, sec. 97.

of his contract, which complaint, if successful, is to be reported by the justice to the Governor, who *may* thereupon order the indenture to be cancelled.* By another section it is provided in these words: †—

"If it shall at any time appear to the Immigration Agent-General that any immigrant has not been paid the wages due to him, or has suffered in any way any ill-usage, or has not enjoyed or been deprived of (*sic*) any of the privileges, advantages, immunities, and comforts (*sic*) intended to be secured to him by the provisions of this ordinance, &c.; or has been treated in any way contrary to the provisions of this or any such ordinance; the Immigration Agent-General may prosecute an inquiry in respect to any such matters as aforesaid; and the Immigration Agent-General may either before or after such inquiry lay an information or make a complaint in his own name or in the name of any such immigrant as he may think fit, against the employer of such immigrant or any other person," &c. But by an oversight there appears to be no penalty affixed to any offences not coming within other laws of the colony, the result of which is that in cases where wages are withheld or stopped the magistrates do not feel authorised to apply a summary remedy.‡

These provisions conferred on the Immigration Agent-General powers of the highest consequence to the Coolie, since, if he were a man of independent spirit, he could by them set in motion all the forces of

* Ordinance 4, 1864, sec. 98. † Ordinance 4, 1864, sec. 99.
‡ Report, &c., ¶ 137.

the law and the Executive to obtain justice for his Coolie wards. It will surprise any reader attached to constitutional usages to learn that the whole of these powers were practically withdrawn from the Agent-General, not by a repealing ordinance, but by a stroke of the Governor's pen!

"The history of Mr. Crosby's relations to Sir Francis Hincks was a continual diminution of his (right of) initiative, until, from being the head of an important State department, he had become a sort of chief clerk in an office directed in its minutest details by the Governor in person."

So say the Commissioners; and doubtless the history of the relations of Sir Francis Hincks to the colony, could it be written in its bare facts and consequences, would be one of very remarkable interest. The Commissioners do not go on—as they might well have done—to probe the motives, real and apparent, which urged Mr. Hincks to take so autocratic a course. His duty to the Office which had appointed him, as well as to abstract justice and humanity, was clearly to uphold to the utmost that power which alone checked the absolute power of the planters, yet he thought fit to assume to himself, as the head of the Executive, the discretion of carrying out or holding in abeyance some of the most important duties or sanctions of a great department. Only the authority of the Commissioners could have unurned the records of this odd proceeding, and I give the result in their own words:*—

* Report, ¶ 140–147, 152, 153.

"This prohibition was communicated to Mr. Crosby in a letter from the Government Secretary, written by the Governor's orders, upon the occasion of a correspondence arising in reference to another case, in which the conduct of a stipendiary magistrate was impugned, of which an extract is subjoined:—

"'There is, however, a question of a more general nature suggested by this correspondence, namely, how far it is desirable that you should, as Immigration Agent-General, institute legal proceedings on behalf of immigrants, and conduct them in your professional character as a barrister-at-law.

"'The Governor has naturally considered this branch of the subject, and recognises to the fullest extent the zeal you have displayed and the anxiety you have manifested to discharge your duty to the Government and to the immigrants whose interests are so especially committed to its protection. His Excellency has, nevertheless, arrived at the conclusion that it will be preferable for you, in future, to submit all cases in which you may think official interference called for, for the consideration of the Executive, by whom they will be laid before the responsible legal advisers of the Crown; and if they should be of opinion that the circumstances are such as to require it, the necessary steps will be taken to secure the object you have in view, by providing for the appearance of counsel in all cases where the circumstances may seem to require it.'

"Mr. Crosby evidently considered this prohibition to apply rather to the manner, than to the act, of con-

ducting a prosecution; for, on the 3rd of February, 1865, he again appeared in court as prosecutor in a case against two overseers, for assaulting a Chinese immigrant on Plantation Wales. The case was dismissed; but the overseers had previously been discharged from the plantation. The expenses and cost of suit to the Agent-General amounted to $5.94.

"This case was followed by another communication, as follows :—

"'3 February, 1865.

"'SIR,

"'I am directed by the Governor to acquaint you that his attention has been called to a statement in the newspapers of your appearing before Mr. Stipendiary Magistrate Plummer, in your official capacity, as his Excellency infers, to prosecute a complaint on behalf of an immigrant, under the provisions of sec. 99 of Ordinance 4 of 1864.

"'It is his Excellency's opinion that it is undesirable for the Immigration Agent-General to appear as prosecutor, except under special circumstances; and the object of my letter, No. 1,800, of the 23rd December last, to which I request your reference, was to signify to you the Governor's wish that, before acting under the clause in question, you should acquaint me, for his consideration, with the grounds on which you consider interposition necessary.

"'Not having received any reply to that communication, his Excellency assumed that you would be guided in your future proceedings by the view of the Executive; but he has reason to believe that

in a similar case you brought an appeal before the Supreme Court of Review, without any such previous consultation as his Excellency had hoped you would have adopted.

"'He cannot, therefore, but fear that a difference of opinion exists between the Executive Government and yourself as to the extent of your powers under the ordinance, and he has thought it expedient to afford you this further opportunity of explaining your views upon the subject.

"'I am, Sir,

"'Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) "'WM. WALKER,

"'Gov. Secretary.'

"This letter not unnaturally produced an answer of some length, in which Mr. Crosby endeavoured to show the inconvenience of the method of proceeding now enjoined upon him.

"A third communication followed, in which the Governor laid down more fully than before the extent to which he wished to be consulted in immigration matters; and, in fact, assumed the cognizance of all matters of any importance, at the same time facilitating business by suggestions for the adoption of a less formal style in reports and minutes than before.

"'I have received and laid before the Governor your letter of the 11th instant, which only reached me yesterday; and I am directed by his Excellency to acquaint you that he deems it undesirable to notice

further the specific cases adverted to by you in your letter at some length, as his object is rather to secure a more satisfactory administration of the department in future than to occupy himself with the past.

"'The Governor desires me to remind you that he has a direct responsibility for the acts of any department of the Government which necessarily involves consultation with him on all subjects of importance, so that his sanction may be obtained to the action taken in the department.

"'Although reference has been made in the present correspondence to proceedings which may be taken under section 99 of Ordinance 4 of 1864, the Governor is aware that many other proceedings have been adopted by you without his previous sanction, though, in his opinion, such sanction ought to have been obtained.

"'The Governor wishes you clearly to understand that, in making these observations, no censure is implied. If the system be defective, the Immigration Agent-General is even less responsible for it than the Governor.

"'The object which his Excellency has now in view is to devise an improved system for the future, calculated to lighten materially the work both of this office and of the Immigration Department, to secure harmony and to expedite the despatch of business; that the present circuitous mode of correspondence may be dispensed with; and that this department may be to a great extent relieved from the charge of keeping voluminous records upon immigration matters

which must always be accessible in the Immigration Department.

"'The Immigration Agent-General should then adopt the system now pursued in this office. All letters received should be registered, and then docketed with the number and date of receipt, and sent to the Government Secretary, with such suggestions as to disposal of the matter made in a brief marginal note as you, as head of the department, may think suitable.

"'The papers of each day should he sent in a canister to this office every afternoon, by three o'clock, or oftener in cases of emergency, and would be returned the following morning, marked "Approved," with the date on the paper; or, if the subject should require discussion, or that the Governor should wish to refer it to other departments, minutes should be made in the same informal manner on the original document, or on papers attached thereto, so that the opinion of every person consulted would be on record, the Governor giving his ultimate decision on his own responsibility.

"'Such minutes would require very little time in preparation; and when action had to be taken, a letter, the substance of which would be embodied in the final minute, might be written without a rough draft in the great majority of cases.

"'While the Governor has thought this a convenient opportunity of communicating to you his views as to the proper mode of conducting the business of the department in future, his Excellency, pending the

report of the Commission of Inquiry now sitting, has merely directed me to acquaint you that he must adhere to the opinion already communicated to you, that, with regard to proceedings under section 99 of Ordinance 4 of 1864, and to all other important matters, reference to him should be made before any action is taken; and his Excellency desires me further to assure you that this mode of proceeding will not involve the delay which you apprehend, as it is his invariable practice to despatch all business with the greatest promptitude.

"'I have the honour to be, Sir,

"'Your obedient humble servant,

(Signed) "'WALTER HOWARD WARE,

"'Acting Government Secretary.'

"It will easily be gathered, from the above communication, that some difference of opinion and loss of harmony existed at this time between the Governor and the Agent-General.

"In fact, the very same day that the letter last quoted was written, the Combined Court reported a discussion upon *a proposition of the Governor** for placing on the estimate a sum of $1,500 by way of travelling expenses, payable in equal proportions to the sub-agents, *independently of the action of the Agent-General.** To this Mr. Crosby strongly objected, as taking the power of travelling himself, and of regulating the travelling of the sub-agents, entirely out of his hands. The Governor, looking only to the ordinary visits, regarded the travelling as a matter

* The italics are mine.

with which Mr. Crosby had nothing to do, and appealed to the very small sum expended by Mr. Crosby on special visits since the time that the travelling expenses had been defrayed on account, as a proof that it was unreasonable to place the disposal of the large sum of money now voted in his hands. Into the question of the comparative increase or decrease in the respective emoluments of the Agent-General and the sub-agents, we are not disposed to enter; but it is due to Mr. Crosby to say that, throughout the controversy, he alone seems to have kept in view the importance of securing the utmost facility of paying special visits to estates—visits to investigate complaints, as distinguished from the ordinary visits for re-indenturing purposes.

"Governor Hincks, on leaving the colony for a short period, forwarded to the Colonial Office a series of complaints against the action of the Agent-General in opposing this scheme, and in other matters of trifling importance; and follows it up with a parting direction to Mr. Crosby, dated three days afterwards, *to send every paper, however insignificant, accompanied by a minute, to himself for approval before acting upon it.* Governor Hincks then left the colony; and this last communication was not acted upon for a considerable time.

"The return of Governor Hincks replaced matters as he left them with regard to prosecutions. Mr. Crosby was censured by the Home Government for indiscretion in the manner of his opposition to the Governor's plans; but it was not until a year afterwards that he found himself compelled, upon his own return from

leave, to conform to the instructions issued in May, 1866; and to send literally every note that came into the office in his canister to the Governor.

"The particular communication which Mr. Crosby quotes as having occasioned this final order was not quite so insignificant as he deemed it. It merely contained the name and description of an immigrant, but it seems that the result of this information was that Mr. Crosby's correspondent, apparently without his knowledge, *took up the cudgels against an influential manager in respect of some grievance alleged by the immigrant*, and *complained to the Governor of his (the manager's) conduct.** From this time forward, at all events, and perhaps it may be said for some time previously, the Immigration Office, as a department of the Government, has no history."

No one who reads this account can fail to see its distinctive bearing on the relation of the planters to the Executive. Why should the Governor desire to hold absolutely in his own hands control of the entire business of the Immigration Office? Is it not dangerous that he, who may be intriguing in other matters, should suppress any original power in an important State department, and reserve to himself the right of setting in motion or restraining the laws against the most powerful class of a community? Lastly, let any one candidly ask himself what would have been the effect of a similar interference by the Governor in any other of the Colonial departments, and whether the plutocracy of Demerara would not soon have made

* *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*

audible in Downing Street a very loud protest against his usurpation? In fact, I fear we may take it that the planters looked with jealousy on Mr. Crosby's officiousness, and the Governor was not unwilling to appease their discontent.

Mr. Crosby himself, in the course of his examination, protested very strongly against the injurious effect upon his official status of Mr. Hincks's usurpation.

"*Q.* 1120. Section 99 (Ord. 4 of 1864) appeared to leave me to judge whether I ought or ought not to take legal proceedings; but in consequence of one or two cases which were brought before the higher Court, in which I appeared, not as counsel, but as representative of the immigrants, there was a degree of restraint put upon me; it was on an occasion when, never exercising the functions of a barrister, but coming to Court in the habiliments of a barrister out of respect to the Court, I appeared as I did invariably as the Protector of Immigrants. There were a great many reports by me on the subject. I was very hostile to that sort of restraint, but of course, being an executive officer, my duty was to bow. I was compelled to do so, and I did it of course. An executive officer has no choice, he must obey the commands of his superior officers whatever they may be; he has no business to exercise any independent action. But I maintain that I ought to have and exercise independent action, being at the head of so responsible a portion of the Colonial Government, answerable to the Executive if I exercise an unwise

discretion, and very much more so if I exercise any imprudent discretion or anything that could bear any bias.

"*Q.* 1121. With regard to the subordinate officers of your department, are they under your direction?—*A.* Yes, they are; but I have no hesitation in saying that in consequence of that communication made during the period of time when I was on the bench, *it disorganised the establishment and made those parties independent of me who ought to be subordinate to me.*

"*Q.* 1122. The President. That was during the year 1864.—*A.* During the time I was on the bench.

"*Q.* 1123. In 1864?—*A.* In May, 1864. I not only commented on it personally, but *I commented on it very strongly to the Secretary of State himself. I showed him that it was a complete disorganisation of the whole establishment.*

"*Q.* 1124. Sir George Young. Was your office recognised as the office of Protector of Immigrants for the Colony?—*A.* No; I was not called Protector of Immigrants, but under Act No. 7 of 1864 you will see that the powers given in effect and in reality caused the Immigration Agent-General to be Protector of Immigrants as much as the Protector of Immigrants in Calcutta; and therefore the Immigration Agent was the party to step in on all occasions and under all circumstances for the protection of these immigrants, and to see that they were fairly and justly and properly dealt with.

"*Q.* 1125. The President. Which Ordinance gave you these powers?—*A.* No. 7 of 1854. It was the

earliest organisation of the system passed by Mr. Wodehouse. By it the Immigration Agent-General is protected when he goes on any estate, and is secured from interruption."

In 1866 and in 1868 Mr. Crosby was absent from his office, either on leave or to take the place of an absent judge. He was, however, still the Immigration Agent-General. His head clerk, or sub-agent, Mr. Gallagher, acted for the head of the office, and, from all I could learn, acted with the distinguished approval of the planters. By the Ordinance 12 of 1866, which is even a few degrees more desultory a piece of legislative literature than the celebrated 4 of 1864, each estate was to keep its register of births, deaths, desertions, &c.,—and *this register, after signature by the sub-agent, was to be* "good *primâ facie* evidence of the correctness of all and singular of that which is therein set forth"—"a process of evidence-making very justly objected to as an abuse of legislative authority."* Both this ordinance and that of 1868 —the provisions of which were chiefly and obviously to facilitate, not the Coolie's remedies, but those of his employer—were passed without consulting the Agent-General. Though Mr. Gallagher drafted the original drafts of one of the ordinances, at least, and seemed very proud of the achievement, neither he, nor the Governor, nor the Court of Policy, had seen fit to communicate their intentions to the head of the department immediately interested! He first heard of them after the ordinances were passed †—a state of

* Report, &c., ¶ 155. † Ib., ¶ 156.

relations in the Colonial Administration that naturally awakens some very curious reflections.

To the honour of the present Governor, Mr. John Scott, it should be mentioned that his course in relation to the Immigration Office has been in some degree to restore to it the dignity it had lost; but it now needs reconstruction and establishment by a firm hand on the broadest possible basis.

"It will be seen," say the Commissioners,* "that we make no secret of our conviction that the conversion of the Immigration Office from a public department into a sort of secretariat of the Governor's (*sic*) † for immigration purposes was a gross administrative mistake. If the Governor of British Guiana were absolute, it would still be impolitic that his personal initiative should be required in a series of details of small importance to the welfare of the colony at large, but touching very closely the interests of the principal private persons under his sway. But being as he is an officer of great, indefinite, but not absolute power, standing face to face with an aristocracy wielding a power equally indefinite and not incommensurate with his own, it is in the highest degree inexpedient that the daily routine work of an office expressly founded to protect the immigrants, when necessary, against the mistakes or failings of the individual members of that aristocracy, should be done, and known to be done, under his eye, if not by his own

* Report, &c., ¶ 157.

† The Commissioners' style throughout has a delightful luxurious tropical *abandon* about it, but the enormous range of their labours abundantly excuses them.

hand. The tendency which we have observed in perusing the very important series of complaints from which we have quoted so often has continually been to deal with the grievances of immigrants as matters *of administration or even of private correspondence, rather than of public justice.* The penal clauses of the Consolidated Ordinance affecting employers and managers, except in two or three cases of ill-usage, which might after all have been treated as cases of common or aggravated assault, have been suffered to lie dormant, while the Government Secretary was writing to the attorney or manager—obtaining a promise of redress more or less indefinite, and informing the Agent-General thereupon that no further action was required."

Hence, as we have seen,* the Commissioners emphatically recommend that the anomaly on which, long before their Report had been made, I had animadverted in *Good Words*—namely, that the head of the Immigration Department was not a member of the Court of Policy—should be remedied.†

When we consider the range of questions involved in this elaborate and difficult system; the extent and variety of the machinery necessary for its efficient, not to say its felicitous, working, and the natural disadvantage at which the Coolie stands on all occasions in his relations to the planters, there can be no question of the imperative call for this reform—one, I hope, that the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who has seen fit to retain Mr. Crosby in his present

* Ante, pp. 178, 179. † Report, &c., ¶ 161, 162.

position, though he applied a few months since for a vacant puisne judgeship in the colony, will immediately insist upon. The presence of the Receiver-General in the Court of Policy might easily be dispensed with, in order to make room for so essential an addition to the Legislature.

The Commissioners have not in their Report referred to the fact that, in the ordinance passed last year in Trinidad,* under the auspices of Mr. Arthur Gordon, the late Governor, the power and authority of the Immigration Agent-General in that colony are properly maintained. The whole Act, indeed, is a great improvement on that of British Guiana. As to this point, it gives special power to the Agent-General to inspect the state and condition of the immigrants, and report to the Governor every six months ;† in case it should appear to him that an immigrant has been ill-used, or in case of *neglect of duty or breach of contract on the part of the employer*, he may, by notice in the *Gazette*, cancel the indenture of such immigrant; and, as an additional sanction in such a case, "no immigrant shall be allotted to such employer under any application previously made by him."‡ Further, "the Governor may, by like notice, cancel the indenture of any immigrant if the Agent-General shall report that the accommodation provided for such immigrant is bad or insufficient, or that any immigrant

* "An Ordinance enacted by the Governor of Trinidad, with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof, with regard to Immigration, Nov. 13, 1870."

† Ib., s. 22. ‡ Ib., s. 23.

requiring medical care and treatment has not been sent to hospital or received proper medical treatment, or if the Governor shall on any other ground consider it requisite so to do."* All penalties and forfeitures under the ordinance may be sued and recovered by the Agent-General; and, finally, "the Agent-General, and every sub-agent and inspector, have power to enter upon any plantation, and to inquire into any breach of the peace or offence against the ordinance, and to administer an oath to any person able to give evidence touching any such matter, and to grant a warrant for the immediate arrest of any person who may appear to have been guilty" of the offences designated.

By this ordinance the intention plainly is to erect in the person of the Immigration Agent-General a high original authority, able, on the Coolie's behalf, to cope with the most audacious employer. Such an intention was manifestly in Mr. Crosby's own brain when he drafted his luckless Ordinance of 1864. Such a power is incontestably essential to the proper status of his office; and one of the earliest reforms to be insisted upon is to assimilate the powers and authorities of the office in British Guiana to those of its counterpart in Trinidad.

* "An Ordinance enacted," &c., s. 24.

CHAPTER XVII.

INDENTURES, REGISTERS, RE-INDENTURES, AND IMPRISONMENTS.

WE have seen how under the Indian laws and those of British Guiana the Coolie is enlisted, conveyed to his destination, and allotted to the planter. We are now to consider *the laws at the seat of labour*.

When the allotment of the Coolie to a plantation has been made in the manner described in a former chapter, he comes within the pale of that artificial system of legislation by which it is sought to check and countercheck the misunderstandings or breaches liable to arise between him and his employer. The original certificate of the magistrate in India was in the nature of a contract made immediately with the Colonial Government. It is true that the engagement is to accept its nominee as the co-contractor on arrival in the colony, but the Colonial Government can at no time absolve itself from the direct responsibility of that original contract. So soon as the Coolie has been allotted to a master, a process consequent on certain formalities of application, deposit,

and payment duly prescribed by the law, he is indentured to the allottee. The indenture is in this form :*—

This indenture, made on the 1st day of April in the year 1867, between *John Smith*, as proprietor (or attorney, &c.), of Plantation *Blank*, in the county of *Demerara*, in the colony of British Guiana, of the one or first part, and the several (*Indian, Chinese, &c., as the case may be*) immigrants whose names are respectively subscribed hereto, of the other or second part, witnesseth as follows :—

That the said employer agrees to hire the services of the said several immigrants, and the said several immigrants agree to serve the said Employer as Labourers for the term of *five* years, commencing on the *1st day of April*, 1867, subject in all respects to the provisions of the Consolidated Immigration Ordinance, 1864.

(Signatures).

(Attestations).

Both employer and immigrant, therefore, are thenceforth bound by the provisions of the Colonial Immigration Laws. By this time I am afraid Ramsammy has no option but to accept the terms, even should he know and object to them. But they are not exactly the terms explained to him in India.

One of the earliest questions naturally arising after the Coolie's arrival is his physical fitness for agricultural labour. Though men should have escaped the examination of the agents in India they may, as we have seen, be so unfit to work that it is impolitic to indenture them. For this contingency the ordinance provides a remedy, which it is in the power of the Executive to apply. In cases where an immigrant appears to have some capacity, but is not adapted to agricultural labour, "he may be indentured to perform such other service as he may be willing and fit to perform." † Or if, within three

* Ordinance 4, 1864, s. 41, schedule B., No. 4.

† Ordinance 4, 1864, s. 57.

months of the arrival of any immigrant who has been indentured in the ordinary way, it appears that he has any disease or disability rendering him permanently unable to serve under his indenture, the employer may apply to the Executive to relieve him of the labourer, and the latter may be sent to one of the public institutions of the colony. To such an immigrant the Governor may grant a certificate of exemption from labour; and may also, if he think fit so to do, order any such immigrant to be provided, at the expense of the Immigration Fund, with a passage back to India.* The Chinese, it will be remembered are not provided with back passages.

It appears on the face of it necessary to the welfare as well of any chance wretches incapable of duty, as of the masters on whom the liability of maintaining them would otherwise rest, that these provisions, even though they involve expense, should be freely carried out by the Executive. Practically you cannot force men to be benevolent against their will, and a dead-weight on an employer's pocket we may generally expect him to shirk if he can, whether he be in Demerara or Great Britain. Why should we count on greater generosity in a planter than we find in a Board of Guardians? I did see such an instance of fair treatment in the case of a powerful-looking fellow on the Houston estate. As we were passing him his low salaam attracted my attention to his good condition. Mr. Carruthers, the manager, stopped and called him. He faced us silent. "Go on,"

* Ordinance 4 of 1864, s. 58.

said the manager. Placing his two hands together, he proceeded to drum with his finger on his lips, producing a peculiar sing-song whizzing. "There," said his master, "that's all that man can do. He never does a stroke of work. He's clearly an idiot, and I have asked the Executive to relieve me of him, but they won't do it: so I have to feed him for five years." Now, in my opinion, nothing should have deterred the Executive from returning the man to India. Mr. Crosby stated that this had been done in several cases. "Last year I sent back two women in one ship. They were in fact idiots, and were sent back. I have done so on more than one occasion, when I have found old persons who were incapable of getting their livelihood and wished to return." The necessity for this "entirely arises, in my opinion, from our not having a proper medical man in the depôt at Calcutta continuously to perform his duties—connected with the depôt, but not entirely under the control of the agent, because one should be a slight check on the other. The surgeon should be a man on whom this colony can rely for having proper people sent for the labour of the colony. *We should save* 25 *per cent. upon the whole amount of the immigrants introduced.*" But there can be no doubt that these sections were not very freely put in force, and that numbers of immigrants quite unused to agricultural labour, quite unfit to engage in it, and quite ignorant, till they found themselves face to face with it and its iron exigency, of the Colonial Labour Law, were allotted

to estates. There is little difficulty in tracing the results of such a state of things. The climate is trying enough to strong men, but to these weak creatures, especially when exposed to the hardships they had to bear on some of the badly-managed estates, it soon became an impossibility to earn enough to maintain them. Often in hospital, often by their weakness tempted to feign even worse disease than really afflicted them, they became a burthen to the estate, a nuisance to the manager, and restless, complaining, unprofitable, in the work they did. It was natural, when he found himself saddled with such persons, for the manager to determine to get all he could out of them. Hence would come frequent summonses before the magistrate, proofs that they were fit to labour—which meant practically were not quite fit to be in hospital—convictions, imprisonments, return of the same miserable creatures to repeat the process, till death, or hopeless debility, or suicide, relieved the estate of the incubus. It was against such occurrences that the planters themselves found it necessary to act, though I cannot help thinking that many of them were so anxious to have the labour, that they were willing to run the risk of taking the small amount it cost them even out of third-rate immigrants. *Fiat experimentum in corpore vili*, rather than not at all. In the future, care must be taken, not only in British Guiana, but in other West Indian colonies, that opportunities are not afforded of repeating that dreadful experiment. I have spoken of the above process as a "natural" process. In a

despatch of Sir Philip Wodehouse to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the provisions of the Consolidation Immigration Ordinance, he says :—

"From the first of these causes (*i.e.*, the expense, &c., attending the immigration) there arises *naturally* in the minds of the immediate employers, and perhaps of all classes, a strong desire to obtain from the immigrant what they regard as nothing more than a just return for the heavy outlay attendant on his introduction, and his restoration to his own country." This I should explain alluded only to the length of indentures, but the expression is a significant one.

I was informed that previously to the Commission the streets of Georgetown used to be frequented by terrible and ghastly subjects of disease. Lepers are now by the law of British Guiana, in contravention, I believe, of the Report of the Leper Commission against the contagiousness of the disease, confined to a leper village. Yet I have seen a few objects exposed in Georgetown, for which humanity and decency demanded a kindly asylum. The exportation of old or feeble men to the West Indies as labourers is obviously inhuman, but it is against the interests of the planters, and is therefore an evil not likely to be of long duration.

It is clearly of the first moment that the Executive in any Coolie-worked colony should maintain a rigorous watch over the *personnel* of the estates. Every man, woman, and child under indenture should be registered, identified, and from time to time ac-

counted for, by the planter to the Government of the colony, and by that Government to the Colonial Office. There need be no more difficulty in doing this respecting fifty or sixty thousand persons than in accounting, as they do in some of our mammoth establishments, for every pound of staple that goes in and out during the year. The Immigration Ordinances contain provisions aimed at securing this end. Whether they are sufficient, and are rigidly enforced by the authorities, must be vital points in any inquiry concerning Coolie immigration. Registers of indentured persons, of marriages, of births, of deaths, of deserters, of suicides, of immigrants imprisoned, carefully kept by the employers and duly reported to the Immigration Office in the colony, are essential to the proper working of the system. In fact, Mr. Crosby's ambition was a right and reasonable one, namely, "to be able at any time to account for every immigrant in the colony." The importance of this will be clear to the reader if he will consider the vast extent of the country, the seclusion of the estates, and their contiguity to a wilderness. The Immigration Agent-General referred to the inconveniences likely to arise out of imperfect returns in this quaint fashion: "The registers of mortality are not in all respects certain and reliable, because sometimes persons are reported dead when they are not so, and sometimes persons are reported as having just died when they have died three or four years before. Then we are obliged *to write and ask* who are really dead, as the person mentioned had died three or four years before!" The

difficulties of identification are aggravated by the number of Indian "Smiths" or "Joneses" who come in the same ship. The uncertainty and imperfectness of these returns were the less excusable because, by the Ordinance 4 of 1864, a penalty of $24 was imposed for neglect to make them. Mr. Crosby, however, in the course of his examination, defended the Immigration Office from its too evident omission to enforce the law by suing for the penalty, on the ground that, by a technical construction of the Act, the clause was inoperative. "The words in the directory clause of the Act being, that *such a person shall make out and deliver* the half-yearly and other returns. Whereas the penalty is for *not sending them in.*" The Commissioners express their surprise that such technicalities had in this and other cases restrained the action of the Immigrant Agent-General, but a not very deep study of the courts of Demerara enabled me to see that, in their love of judicial straw-splitting and nonsensical adherence to the letter, they too much resembled our courts in the days of special pleading; and no doubt Mr. Crosby, who has had considerable experience as a colonial judge, knew his measure.

The indenture, as we have seen, extends over five years. At the end of that time the freedman is open to a re-indenture, if he pleases, *for another term of five years*, and for no less period. For this he receives a bounty of $50. We may consider, *first*, the law regulating the machinery of re-indentures; and *secondly*, the policy of re-indentures, for any and what term of years. And (1) it is the duty of the Immigration

Agent-General, or his sub-agents, to visit every estate in the colony once in six months, after giving seven days' notice by advertisement. The manager is then required to produce every indentured Coolie who may have completed, or may within the next six months complete, his term of service. Thereupon the agent may, if the Coolie is willing, renew his indenture.

The state of the law with respect to these re-indentures is less than satisfactory. Its main policy is to encourage re-indentures—to encourage them for a long space of time, and thus to keep the Coolie in bond and out of the free market. This is directly contrary to the policy originally entertained in the Colonial Office in the Duke of Newcastle's time, when one of the ends held in view, in permitting immigration, was the ultimate establishment of the Coolie as a free labourer. This also must be opposed to the real and permanent interest of the immigrants, who are by this expedient kept in a floating state, and whose fate, as I have previously pointed out, is made to depend on contingencies. The means by which this policy is carried out are twofold. One is an appeal to the Coolie's cupidity, by offering him the bounty for five years lumped in one sum. The other is by enactments which often place it in the power of the employer to hold serious threats over the immigrant if he will not re-indenture. By sec. 94 of Ordinance 4 of 1864, and 7 of Ordinance 13 of 1866, the agent, before granting the certificate or re-indenturing the Coolie, must ascertain whether he has, during his period of service, deserted or been imprisoned for a longer time

than one month in each year of his indentureship, and, for whatever time has thus been lost to the master, extend the indenture. So that a Coolie who had, during his five years, spent six or ten months in prison, would, in addition to that punishment, be obliged to repay his master six or ten months' service. This seems unreasonable, but is almost a necessary consequent to inflicting imprisonment for breach of contract, on which I shall have a word to say directly. The manner of proving this is, perhaps, unique in modern legislation. It is done by entries in a book called the Estates Register, *kept by the manager*, and his oath is the voucher for its correctness. No reference is, in practice, made to prison registers to verify these statements. "The Estates Register," says the Report, "of Imprisonments and Desertions, upon which so much is left to depend, is in general fairly kept; but the Acting Immigration Agent-General (Mr. Gallagher), who avers himself to be the suggester, appears to consider that 'if the employers choose to omit entering desertions and imprisonments, it is not for the Immigration Office to find fault with them; the duty of the Immigration Officer being restricted to seeing that no entries are made which are not *bonâ fide*.' It is obvious that a register which is kept with accuracy only if and when it is intended to use it as evidence is not merely an *ex parte* document, but an *ex parte* document of second-rate value as evidence, and the device of propping its authority by the manager's statement on oath is distinctly contrary to principle." The Commissioners

here are rather hard on Mr. Gallagher. They expect him to know, what his antecedents gave them no ground to hope for, Latin and jurisprudence. He evidently used *bonâ fide* in ignorance of its meaning, his own intention being expressed by the words "accurate," "correct;" while, as to the other branch, *principles* are not permitted to be stumbling-blocks in the way of West India legislation. But, as a fact, these injudicious provisions appear rarely to work any practical injustice, since the right under the law is rarely enforced. The power, however, which it, in conjunction with the large bounty, puts in the hand of the employer of putting the screw upon an immigrant to re-indenture is one which it would be good policy to withdraw. For the terms of imprisonment alone, it would every way be better that they should be counted as part of the service. It would have a beneficial effect in restraining the employer, not unduly, from too frequent appeals to the magistrate, if there were placed before him the certainty of absolutely losing the time of the labourer in case of a conviction. The equitable addition of lost days, which I presently propose, should be rendered incapable of misuse as a threat, by making it subject to the provision that, in every case in which such lost days have been proved, they must peremptorily be added to the old indenture before a new one is permitted. But I say, it is doubtful whether the infliction of imprisonment under the Labour Laws will bear the test of examination.

Imprisonment for breach of a civil contract is

opposed to modern, if not indeed to ancient, English notions of freedom, and is on principle open to serious criticisms. By the common law—so high a reverence had our Saxon forefathers for the idea of personal freedom—"*the body of a freeman could not be made subject to distress or imprisonment by contract, but only by judgment.*" Under our Master and Servants Acts, it is now possible for a man in England to enter into an agreement for a term of service, a wilful breach of which exposes him to imprisonment for three months with hard labour. I should be glad to see an enactment so invidious blotted from our statute book. Is it policy to permit any man to make a contract based on such a contingency? Is it well to record in the laws, in a concrete form, the inequality of rich and poor?

For my own part, I cannot hesitate to express a strong opinion against the imprisonment of Coolies or any other labourers for breach of contract, a repugnance confirmed the more I inquired and thought about the immigration system. I know the defenders of this provision will say (and say with much plausibility) that the labourer has no other amends to make—he must give his body for the sin of his soul. The master you can mulct in money, and goods, and credit, and social standing; but the pariah—without wealth, or possessions, or credit, or position—nothing but his bare poor skin—full of bones, thews, and sinews—you must, like another Shylock, in another way, take your terms out of that. God help me if I could do it, were there never a stroke of work done on

any property of mine! And when you attentively look into the effect of it, you will see how it demoralises the subject. Should he complain of his master's breach of contract, he sees the latter asked to pay a monetary fine, while he, for a converse breach, suffers as a felon. Repeat that operation a few times, and then behold the sort of man you have made. Hardened, harassed, unwilling, shirking,—broken perhaps in spirit; rightly or wrongly indignant that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor,—what kind of work do you get out of him? Is it hopeful, energetic, strengthful, willing? or is it such as you would get out of your stubborn child if you stood over him with a dog-whip? You have no right to inflict on a man a punishment disproportioned to his offence. Wherein any law has failed to adjust with tolerable accuracy offence and penalty, it is, and must be, not only unjust but injurious. Were it to be proved that such a provision is essential to a system, it were better the system should not exist. But I do not believe it to be essential. Where wages are sufficient to maintain in comfort an average Coolie, regard being had to the existing prices of staple articles of food in the country—*and he ought not to be imported into any country where that condition does not ordinarily exist*—I suggest that the proper and just method of punishing him for breach of contract would be for the magistrate to mulct him in a small weekly sum for two or three weeks—taking care, however, not to make the fine so severe as virtually to reduce the strength of the

labourer; or, it may be, peremptorily to add lost days, proved in court from week to week, to the term of his indenture. This would, in the long-run, and as to the general body of immigrants, be far more effectual than imprisonment to repress their indolent or wanton breaches of agreement, and would, moreover, have upon its face an equity easily recognised by the general body of their fellows. I cannot help thinking that the importance of creating and fostering a healthy public opinion among the immigrants has been too little regarded by planters and planting legislators. With tact in management and judicious legislation they might turn this hint to good account.

(2) The second point is as to the policy of permitting re-indentures at all, and for what, if any, length of time. Considerable changes have taken place in the Colonial legislation on this subject. The Home Government seems to have been loth even to permit a first indenture to extend over so long a period as five years;* but when it was shown to be impossible, or at all events difficult, for the planters on any shorter period of indenture to work out the expenses of obtaining the labourer, that point was conceded. But, as the Commissioners show, it was conceded in contemplation of the object of preparing and acclimatising the immigrant to be a free labourer at the end of that term. By that time, it was anticipated, short indentures or free service would provide sufficient facilities to the planter for securing the labour. But,

* Report, &c., ¶ 232—242.

by Ordinance 4 of 1864, apparently unnoticed by the Colonial Office, an immense lever was put in the hands of the employers, since the only further contract empowered by that law was a contract of re-indenture *for five years certain*. This ran directly counter to the drift of the opinion of the Duke of Newcastle in favour of free labour and short terms. It placed the Coolie in an unfortunate position, because he was tempted with the $50 bounty, and in some cases with $5 or $10 extra inducement from the planter; and if he did not accept this he found himself denuded of the advantages of free houses, hospitals, &c. Hence "the effect of later legislation has been to keep the immigrant population as a whole out of the free labour market. It is true that no man is bound to indenture a second time, but *care has been taken so to arrange the incidents of the system as to induce him with a very strong inducement to re-indenture.** For this purpose the supervising duties of the Immigration Agents have been postponed to the offering of greater facilities for re-indenture. A harsh system of law has been kept up, not so much for use as that condonation for offences under it might be bartered against re-indenture. The position of a free immigrant disposed to remain in the colony has not received that consideration from the legislature which a new country needing population should have afforded to such an element; and the bounty, always a questionable means of inducement when employed to persuade

* What is the use of a Governor if he cannot resist a legislative current like this?

those in a dependent position to refrain from claiming their independence, has been kept at a high rate, in order that the inducement might be sufficient.

It would seem to be a concession that immigration, so far as the Coolies are concerned, has failed to fulfil its first purposes if, after being acclimatised, after learning their work, and after paying their passage out, they must still be brought under indenture after indenture, and not encouraged to take their station in the country as free labourers." *

Thus speak the Commissioners upon one of the most serious and fatal defects of the immigration system in British Guiana. In Trinidad it has been directly met by legislation. By the Trinidad Ordinance 13 of 1870, the first indenture is to be for five years; but it provides for the re-engagement in these terms: †—

"When and so often as any immigrant who shall have already completed, or shall hereafter complete, an industrial residence of five years within this colony, shall be willing to enter into any engagement to labour for any employer, it shall be lawful for the Agent-General of Immigrants from time to time, if he shall see fit, and on payment to such immigrant by such employer such premium or bounty, if any, as may be agreed upon between such immigrant and such employer, to indenture such immigrant to such employer for such time, not exceeding twelve months, as may be agreed upon between such immigrant and such employer, and every such indenture may be according to the form in the schedule D to this ordi-

* Report, &c., ¶ 249. † Trinidad Ordinance 13 of 1870, sec. 20.

nance; and the Agent-General of Immigrants shall keep a register of such immigrants, and shall enter opposite the names of such immigrants the day on which, and the time for which, such indenture shall be made."

I have been informed by the late Governor and by one of the principal planters of Trinidad that the one-year system works well, and, while encouraging independence in the Coolie, exercises also on the master a beneficial restraint, since he can only keep his best immigrants from year to year by kindly treatment.

There is all the more reason for enforcing the adoption of this provision, that the immigrants are not entitled to their return passage until the end of ten years, and therefore are generally bound to remain in the colony during five years after their first indenture has expired, and also that their acclimatisation, and consequent increase in value, help to place them in a more independent position towards the employers, a gain to them which should be carefully guarded, instead of being imperilled by legal regulations. It is a very grave fact, that out of 40,220 persons under indenture, between 17,000 and 18,000 have re-indentured, and that of these some are in their fourth, fifth, or even sixth indenture—thirty years of bond labour! * A fact to awaken the sympathy of the most indifferent spectator. The planter argues that it is essential to his interests, to the safety of the capital he invests, that he should be

* Report, &c., ¶ 523.

assured, if he risks his money upon it, a continuous supply of labour.

Why, after having this for five years, even though it be admitted that those five years are the least valuable of the immigrant's service, he should be allowed to claim over capitalists in other parts of the world, whose fortunes are always dependent on the fluctuations of a free-labour market, this additional advantage, it is hard to see. The effects upon the labourer are too clear and too perilous to be overlooked. Not only is his independence at stake, but the hopes are endangered of his transformation into a better man. The Commissioners have put his situation in a striking epigram: "*The re-indenturing Coolie has only once in his industrial residence of ten years the opportunity of acting and judging as a free man.*" The immigrants themselves are not indifferent to this question. They expressed to us their sense of the iron rigidity of a system, which seemed to leave them no alternative but five more years of bondage. In one instance cited by the Commissioners, where the immigrants of Plantation *Hamburg* had been to town to see Mr. Des Vœux, they, on their return, refused to re-indenture until the Commissioners had reported, in the hope that the Report would be in favour of one year's re-indenture.* The Commissioners have made this recommendation very strongly,† and it must necessarily be one condition of any further extension of Coolie immigration.

* Report, &c., ¶ 523. † Ib., ¶ 522.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WOMEN AND MARRIAGES.

IN considering the other provisions of the Immigration Ordinances, we may next turn to the serious question of women. By section 48 of the principal ordinance, a Chinese woman may be allotted to a plantation and indentured to reside there for five years, but is not "bound to work or perform any labour whatever." Yet it will not be imagined by any one that she is intended to be merely ornamental. If not married, she may assist to keep her male fellow-countrymen on the premises. The dark problem which this suggests is well known to be one of the most difficult arising in the Coolie system. The sexes among the Coolies in British Guiana are in the proportion of 10,000 women to 29,000 men; a serious disproportion, but a far more favourable one than we should be led to hope for from a consideration of the circumstances. The inducements to women are few; the demand for women, apart from the moral or purely animal question, is necessarily a subordinate one. Hence the number of women already imported into British Guiana is one of those

features which is creditable to the good sense and good feeling of the employers. It is true, this is a comparatively recent improvement. The Chinese female immigration seems to have been frightfully disproportionate, and the reader will perhaps have noted with surprise the number of Chinese women in proportion to men at Schoon Ord, as returned by its proprietor, namely, 2 to 114. The disproportion, however, is still great, and gives rise to some of the most anxious difficulties of the Executive. These difficulties are twofold. 1. Those which arise out of improper relations between employers or their subordinates and Coolie women, with the naturally resulting complications, evils, and injuries. 2. Those which arise among and between the Coolies themselves.

The readers of the previous pages will perhaps already have gathered enough to indicate to them the perilous aspect of the body social and politic in this peculiar colony. Very few whites, and those whites absolutely ascendant; a large, lazy, prodigiously sensual and fecund black population; nearly fifty thousand Coolies, of whom a little over one-third are women, scattered in estates through a long range of country: living on each estate the manager, the young overseers, the drivers—the whole of them generally unmarried. It needs no prurient fancy to conceive of the difficulties of such a situation. From the number of complaints that reached me, I was assured that an investigation into the morality of some of the estates would reveal most revolting cir-

cumstances.* The Commissioners report (par. 308): "The records of complaints which we have had occasion to peruse, and even our own observations in visiting estates, have shown us that it is not at all uncommon for overseers, and even managers, to form temporary connections with Coolie women, and in every case with the worst possible consequences to the good order and harmony of the estate." Indeed, they express it as their belief, founded on good authority, as well as on incidents which came to their knowledge, that the recent disturbances were originally due, in a far greater degree than is supposed, to some interference with women on the estate. If we disregard altogether the planters and their assistants, with the temptation held out to them to use force, or fraud, or injustice in the pursuit of their passions, enough occurs in the Coolie communities to shock the steadiest nerves. In one case I saw a Coolie come to Des Vœux with his wife, a fine-looking girl, who stood meekly by his side while he expressed a resolution to "chop her up"—the favourite method among these people of abolishing matrimonial inconveniences, the cutlass being a handy weapon. He informed us that the manager had arranged with her that she was to visit him at his house. On closer inquiry it turned out that the man was not imbued with any holy indignation at her infidelity, but that the quarrel arose about the disposition of the profits. These she was desirous of retaining for herself, and expending on silver

* See the Report, &c., ¶ 865.

ornaments, while he wished to assert his marital rights, if he had any, over the price of his own confusion. The picture of morality here disclosed on all hands is sad enough, and could be intensified by other statements. One Coolie missionary employed by the Wesleyans told me, if I remember rightly, that some years since seven men were hung in the colony in one week for wife-murder. At Leonora I saw an unhappy woman whose face and body had been frightfully disfigured with a cutlass by her "man."

The Ordinance 4 of 1864 directly recognises the difficulties, and endeavours to provide a remedy. By section 125 it is enacted:—

"Whereas it is expedient if possible to prevent the repeated acts of violence committed by male Indian immigrants upon their wives, or reputed wives, or the women with whom they cohabit: Be it enacted, that if the wife or reputed wife, or the female Indian immigrant with whom any male Indian immigrant may cohabit, or any other person, shall exhibit an information before any stipendiary justice that any such male immigrant did unlawfully threaten to murder, wound, beat, or ill-treat any such female immigrant, and that from the threats so used by such male immigrant towards such female immigrant she is afraid, or that such person apprehends such male immigrant may murder her or do her some grievous bodily harm or injury, it shall be lawful for such justice, and he is hereby required, to inquire on oath into all the circumstances, and to order, if he shall deem it neces-

sary so to do, the removal to some other plantation of such one of the parties concerned as in his discretion he shall select, and in the meantime to commit the offending party, with or without hard labour; and such justice shall forthwith forward a copy of the proceedings to the Immigration Agent-General, to be by him laid before the Governor for approval."

So soon after the passing of that ordinance as the 12th October, 1864, a circular was issued by Government, embodying the Attorney-General's opinion that the magistrate had, under the above enactment, the power to order the removal of either the man or woman, or even a third party, such as the paramour.

"Still, some of the magistrates, among them Mr. Ware, hold that the wording of the clause does not bear out that interpretation of it, and they never remove any one threatening or the woman threatened. It is to be regretted that there should be any doubt upon the subject, as it frequently happens that the paramour would be the proper person to remove, and that the husband and wife should not be separated. Such we find to be your Excellency's opinion, as in the case of Toolsie, who seduced Luchmonia from her husband Seoran. Your Excellency remarks, 'It has always been the opinion of myself and Mr. Crosby that the man who takes away the woman should be removed, if the circumstances of the case will justify this being done. To remove the seducer is a warning to others.' And again, in a more recent case, in which the magistrate recommended that Nusseebun should be removed,

who had left her husband, Noor-ali, and went to live with Konhaye, who threatened her life, and the Acting Immigration Agent-General supported the magistrate's recommendation, your Excellency observed, 'If the woman is removed we separate man and wife—a proceeding to be avoided: the danger to be avoided arises from threats made by Konhaye against Noor-ali, and that will be removed by the transfer of Konhaye to another estate—the woman's life has not been threatened by her husband.' And to such an extent was this principle in one case followed, that when Chee-Shee left her husband, Woo-a-Lee, for another, and Woo-a-Lee threatened to commit suicide, on the case being submitted to your Excellency, Mr. Crosby remarked, the woman having declared that she would not return to her husband, the Governor will no doubt order the man Chin-a-foo to be transferred to another estate, if possible, in Berbice, and not separate husband and wife, whatever she may say.'

"This your Excellency approved, and we regret *it has not been possible to follow the principle up in all cases.*" *

"The case of Nubbeebuckus is another of a similar kind. He came from India eight years ago with his wife Astoreah, who left him soon after their arrival in this colony, and went to live with Maighoo for some seven years, but she left him, and returned to her husband, Nubbeebuckus; upon that Maighoo threatened her life, and the magistrate, thinking Nubbee-

* Report, &c., ¶ 862.

buckus the seducer, recommended that he should be removed. It would have caused a curious complication if Astoreah had claimed the right under section 70, Ordinance 4 of 1864, to be indentured on the same estate as her husband, or of commuting for the rest of her service.

"But these cases, though tried by the magistrate under section 125, may have been treated by the Executive under section 112 [by which the Executive is empowered to remove immigrants at any time at discretion] which has been used to separate husband and wife quarrelling without any feeling of jealousy, as will be seen in case No. 39, where Sandhoo left her husband, and refused to return, because she was unable to work for both, as she had been doing for some time past, and he became violent and threatened to do somebody, it is presumed Sandhoo, some bodily harm. This case, Mr. Crosby thought, came under section 125, and ought to have been referred for the magistrate to try, instead of being disposed of on a request from the manager under section 112; but your Excellency thought otherwise, being of opinion that it was not worth while to run any risk, and ordered the man's removal." *

The law or the practice both of Governor and magistrates appears to have been full of incongruity on this point, for the Commissioners go on to say:—

"Mr. Huggins, on the other hand, when Dookhun, a free immigrant, was brought before him for using threatening language to Sundolee, with whom he

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 866, 867.

had formerly cohabited, but deserted for another woman, held that Ordinance 20 of 1856 was not applicable to a case of this nature; and because the man, who was a free immigrant, could not be removed, he recommended the removal of Sundolee, forgetting that there was nothing to prevent Dookhun from following her if he wished to carry out his threat. Imprisonment and an order to find security would, it appears to us, have been more appropriate.

"So in case No. 69, when Sooful was brought before him, charged with having assaulted and beaten Rookmoneah, he took no notice of the assault, but proceeding under section 125, recommended Sooful's removal. The Acting Attorney-General gave it as his opinion that the case did not fall within the provisions of section 125, and Sooful was accordingly removed under section 112. We think that, without multiplying cases, we have given enough to show that removal of somebody, either under section 125 or 112, appears to be considered the panacea for all disputes and quarrels between men and women.

"We wish that Mr. Ware had punished for the assault when a distinct charge under that head was brought before him, and that he and all the magistrates had adopted the course pursued by Mr. Dampier, and punished the husband for assault or threats, and then, perhaps, it would have occurred to the magistrates that the provision of section 11, Ordinance 10 of 1860, might be put in force against the seducers of married women.

"It is remarkable that a case under that section

was brought before Mr. Dampier in November, 1869, in which Seewotohul was charged with enticing Mahadaye away from her husband, Boodhoo, and the manager apprehended that Boodhoo would do Mahadaye some bodily harm. Mr. Dampier tried the case, Seewotohul being the defendant, not Boodhoo; but instead of punishing the defendant for the offence with which he was charged, he recommended his removal from the estate. Your Excellency expressed your regret that the man was not punished under section 11, Ordinance 10 of 1860, as you wished to prove to immigrants the advantages they have by becoming man 'and wife by the modes sanctioned by the ordinances.'

"So in another case which came before Mr. Ware, *a husband Deenah* was charged with threatening to cut his wife Bussunteah's throat, *there was no doubt of their being man and wife*, and she was said to be living with a man named Tolah; but there was no one apparently to advise them, and instead of a case being preferred against Tolah, the magistrate had the case brought before him under section 125, and *recommended that Deenah should be removed.*

"Mr. Crosby, in that case, minutes that section 125, Ordinance 4 of 1864, was not passed in ignorance of Ordinance 10 of 1860, but in contemplation of that ordinance being amended if not repealed, and further penal clauses inserted for the punishment of adultery. A man may now be punished for enticing a woman from her husband, but there is no punishment for the woman, nor any for a man forsaking or discarding

his wife. And in a population where there are, as we have before remarked, only 10,202 females to 29,767 men, a provision might be introduced, punishing married men for adultery; the proviso would not be repugnant to the ideas of people who contemplate the social state of the Indian and Chinese immigrants, which is more than can be said of section 10, Ordinance 10 of 1860.

"If penal clauses were introduced and flogging made a part of the punishment that could be awarded to the men, and 'disgrace' by having their heads shaved a punishment to the women, we should strike at the root of the evil, and the provisions of section 125 would very seldom be called into use, and section 112 need never be used in these cases. We are well aware that the above suggestions are opposed to the spirit of modern penal legislation; but the state of society we find here among the immigrants requires exceptional legislation. The Indian immigrants, on whose condition we are called upon to report, are brought into this colony in very unequal proportions in regard to sex, and the spirit of the laws they find here is not properly adapted to the state of society in which they are placed. We know it may be urged that severe and degrading punishments are steps in a wrong direction, and that we admit, but sometimes in an exceptional case and for a particular purpose it is not inconsistent with the principles of penal law to stamp out the evil by strong measures. If a due proportion of men and women came to this country, or if there were a proper proportion of women in the

country, exceptional legislation would not be necessary; but in the absence of all prospect of such being the case for a long time to come, we see no hopes of overcoming the evil, except by legislation in a direction that would not be tolerated, because it is not required, in better populated and more civilised parts of the world. There are few of the women we imagine who come to this country to whom the punishment of having their heads shaved would be a novelty, at least in idea; very many of them tell us they have come from Lucknow, and that territory has not been long enough under the British rule for all recollection of the punishment to have passed away from the memory of inhabitants of it. But the probability is that if the law was passed, even the abandoned creatures we find coming out here would be coerced into propriety, probably without the law ever being enforced." *

I can hardly agree that it is necessary to resort to the extreme measures here recommended by the Commissioners. It seems a somewhat startling thing that we should first of all create an anomalous state of society, should introduce into it a person unprepared by education or habits to endure it, and then by such singularly harsh artificial measures as are here proposed force him to adapt himself to it. Looking at it in this way, the policy of artificial immigration cannot be acquitted of a serious blot. In our anxiety to make money, we place a number of labourers in a situation of peculiar temptation, of

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 871—877.

peculiar trial to their nature, and when they find it difficult to adapt themselves to that situation we are to hang them, or flog them and shave their heads. Thus the law is their schoolmaster, but I fear it takes them to the devil.

Some of the forms of marriage produced by the Commissioners are very curious, so many as six "kinds of marriage" appearing to be in vogue, of which only four are recognised by the law.*

"Of the 130 cases we have had before us, we find that in 37, persons claim to be married, one according to the rites of the Church of England (case No. 1), apparently converts; another couple (No. 117) say they were married on board ship. The ceremony there appears to consist in signing the following paper:—

Ship *Shand*, Sea, October 21, 1869.

I, Doolmie, the daughter of Akaloo, take thee Dumree, the son of Mukhan, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance, and thereto I plight thee my troth.

Signed_____

Witnesses—

1st. Adhur Chander Doss, L.M.S., Surgeon.
2nd. Henry Le Pau, Master.
3rd. _____

A similar paper was signed by Dumree and witnessed by the same people. Three marriages are said to have been under Ordinance 10 of 1860; 29 were married in India, and one in China.

Of the marriages of doubtful validity, one is a

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 879, 880.

marriage by bond succeeding to a written betrothal. The papers are as follows, though there is some difficulty in recognising the same man's name in the different ways in which it is spelt in these two papers:—

Plantation Enmore, 27 September, 1869.

I, Nellema, of Plantation Annandale, in the parish of St. Paul, county of Demerary, colony of British Guiana, do hereby agree to marry to Year Anny Yew, of Plantation Enmore, in the Parish and County aforesaid; and from the said Year Anny Yew I have this day taken the sum of Thirty Dollars in way of binding the bargain. I have agreed to live with him at once until such time as he shall be able to marry me, that is, in three months time. I have also agreed to pay to the said Year Anny Yew the sum of One Hundred and Fifty Dollars, that is, on condition, that is to say, should I leave him for any other man.

Nellema her × mark.

Witnesses—

Joseph A. Bostick,
Mootoo Sammy.

27th Sept., 1869.

An agreement entered into this Twenty-Fifth day of April, 1870, between the man Ermeinen and the female Nelliama. The female Nelliama agrees to live with the man Ermeinen as husband, and the man Ermeinen agrees to live with the female Nelliama as wife. They both agree to live with each other as man and wife in the presence of these witnesses. The man Ermeinen agrees also to pay all her debts, which debts amount to $37, which she owed to the man Ramsammy (No. 7) of said estate, and the woman Nelliama agrees in case she leaves the man Ermeinen to pay the sum of $40 in addition to the money paid by the man Ermeinen, and which she agrees to pay in case she leaves him for another man.

Plantation Enmore, 25th April, 1870.

The cross of Nelliama × her mark.
The cross of Ermeinen × his mark.

Witnesses—

Shaikadam × his mark.
Chenalumbir × his mark.

It will probably be the reader's impression, that marriage among Coolies in British Guiana is in a state of chaos.

CHAPTER XIX.

IMMIGRATION LAWS AFFECTING THE COOLIE.

THE enactments immediately relating to the mutual performance of contract on the part of the Coolie and of his employer next demand our review. These were consolidated in the Ordinance 4 of 1864, and afterwards amended by Ordinance 9 of 1868. I propose to take first those relating to the Coolie.

They are contained in sections 115—126 of the earlier ordinance; some of these sections, however, referring to technical points of no importance in our present inquiry, and to the female difficulty which has been discussed in the previous chapter. They may be classified in this way:—

1. The obligations of labour; times and tasks.
2. Provisions against desertion.
3. Provisions for securing the immigrant his freedom during the periods when he is entitled to it.
4. Provisions against neglect or injury of employer's property.

Before entering on a technical discussion of the enactments which touch this important branch of the subject, it should be borne in mind that, as I mentioned

in my account of the estates, the system of work adopted in British Guiana is, as a rule, that by *task*, in preference to that by *time*. The payment by results, which was the favourite maxim of an education code, is the politic principle of remuneration adopted by the sugar-planter. It was the plan of slavery; it continues to be the plan under the indentureship. Its advantages are readier and more precise reckoning, with the saving of an elaborate and expensive system of personal oversight.

With this explanation, the reader will the better be prepared to consider the two following sections of the Ordinance 4 of 1864, by which the Coolie's work was originally regulated:*—

"115. Every indentured immigrant shall perform five days' labour, or five tasks, in every week; and in case of any complaint against any immigrant for neglect or refusal to work, it shall be necessary, in order to obtain a conviction, to prove that such immigrant has neglected or refused to attend any time not exceeding, if he shall be employed in the field, seven hours between sunrise and sunset, and if he shall be employed in the estate's buildings, ten hours between the hours of five in the morning and eight in the evening. And if such complaint shall be made in respect to the non-performance of task-work, it shall be necessary, in order to obtain a conviction, to prove that such immigrant has not performed within the week five tasks of the extent assigned for the same rate of wages as daily tasks to the Creole labourers of

* Sections 115 and 116, 4 of 1864.

the colony. Provided always, that it shall be the duty of the magistrate before whom any complaint is brought under this section to inquire and ascertain how long the immigrant charged has been in the colony, and to satisfy himself as to his ability to perform the work assigned to him. And if it should appear to such magistrate that such immigrant, either from want of experience or from bodily infirmity, is unable to perform five days' labour or five tasks within the week, the complaint shall be dismissed. Provided further, that in any case in which the said magistrate shall be of opinion that such immigrant is able to perform a less amount of work, or a less number of tasks, per week, it shall be lawful for the said magistrate by order to assign the amount of work or number of tasks per week to be performed by such immigrant during the time to be fixed in such order. And such order may be continued from time to time at the discretion of the said magistrate; and during the continuance in force of such order, such immigrant shall be liable to conviction for disobedience thereof, in the same manner as is provided in the case of immigrants neglecting to perform the full amount of work prescribed by this Ordinance.

"116. Any indentured immigrant who without reasonable cause shall neglect or refuse to attend at the daily calling over of the names of the immigrants on the muster-roll at the time and place hereinbefore mentioned; or shall neglect or refuse to attend at the time and place at which he may be ordered to attend, to perform the work required of him; or shall neglect

or refuse to begin the work required of him; or shall leave unfinished any work required to be performed by him; or shall neglect or refuse to finish any work required to be performed by him; or shall be absent from his work without leave; or shall be drunk while employed at any work; or shall use to his employer, or any overseer or headman, or other person placed by such employer in authority over him, any threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour; or shall commit any nuisance upon or in the immediate neighbourhood of any dam or public thoroughfare of the estate—shall, on being convicted thereof, be deemed guilty of an offence, and shall pay a fine not exceeding $24, or be imprisoned with hard labour for any time not exceeding one month, and shall in addition, if the convicting justice shall think fit, forfeit the whole or any part of the wages due to him, not exceeding the wages of one week."

If the perusal of these sections test the reader's patience, and any admiration he may be disposed to entertain for the unknown in colonial legislation, his interest in them may be roused when it is stated that, wordy as they are, they were held by the late Chief Justice to be inoperative in a most important part; that no conviction could take place under section 115, and that the term "task" was practically incapable of interpretation. This decision seemed to be a fine stretch of technical art, but it was a decision of the Superior Court; it was notorious in the colony; it gave rise to great heart-burnings; and, more singular than all, proof was afforded to the Com-

missioners that after this decision had been given, affirming the law to be that no convictions could take place under these sections, magistrates in the colony did convict, and immigrants suffered the penalty under them.* I regret to find in the Commissioners' Report that this occurrence, which, short of actual corruption, is one of the most startling proofs that could be afforded of magisterial demoralisation, is treated with undue lenity. Their own words are: "Upon this point, it must be observed, that the decision in question took the colony by surprise, and became the subject of much controversy. For some time it was evidently hoped by the planters, and very likely it was expected by the magistrates, that the ruling of the Chief Justice would be reversed, if a case could be brought before the full court. *Unquestionable as was the magistrates' duty, in the meantime, to conform to the law laid down in the Superior Court,* the fact that they were somewhat slow in accepting a decision of such a character, under such circumstances, *is not sufficient ground for imputing to them partiality in their administration of justice!*" If the "character" and "circumstances" of a decision of a superior court are to be considered in lower review by magistrates, and to be accepted as palliations for what would otherwise admittedly be a gross malpractice and an evidence of partisan feeling discreditable to all concerned, it seems to me the foundations of a pure legal administration will be sapped. The position is as untenable as its adoption by the

* Report, &c., ¶ 28, 29.

Commissioners is a perplexity. I cannot see that any absurdity in the decision, allowing it to exist, or even the fact adverted to by the Commissioners that the immigrants could, in most of the cases, be as easily convicted under the next section, in the least excuses this sort of magisterial strike against a higher tribunal.

The decision, affecting as it did very seriously the labour of the colony, was remedied by legislation. In order to remove the doubt and uncertainty caused by it as to the *minimum* of work required from the immigrant, that was defined, by Ordinance 9 of 1868, section 7, to be one shilling's worth of work per day—the former estimate of a day's work having been a guilder, or 1*s.* 4*d.*—and the weekly minimum of tasks was fixed at five shillings' worth per week, or five days' labour of seven hours a day in the field or ten hours a day in the buildings. Practically, I may say, we have only to deal with the tasks.

The effect of these enactments together, was, *first*, that the standard of wages was to be "the same rate as the wages paid to Creole and other unindentured labourers working on the same plantation—or, in case there should be no such labourers, or they should not be paid according to the average rate of wages for unindentured labourers employed under similar circumstances on the neighbouring plantations, then at the same or the fair average rate of wages, such as are paid to such last-mentioned labourers on the neighbouring plantations."

The reader will need to bear in mind both the cha-

racter of the country, as previously described—stretching for hundreds of miles, with a scattered population, with some estates in lonely and distant localities—and the peculiarity of the relation, an obligatory service by a vast number of labourers, at a rate of pay compulsory on the employer. Into this peculiar relation the present system is obviously intended to force free-trade by putting all labour, indentured and free, into equal competition.*

The *second* effect was to make the amount of wages earned the measure of the task which it was incumbent on the Coolie to execute before he could clear himself of the *minimum* of his week's obligation.

Let us then analyse for a moment the Coolie's position under this arrangement. He is bound to do five shillings' worth of work a week. The question of what is five shillings' worth is an open one, dependent on circumstances—those circumstances of a fickle and uncertain character. They are either:—

1. That some free labourers are labouring at the same sort of work on the same plantation; *or*, in default of that,

2. That free labourers are labouring at the same work on adjacent plantations.

Then, in case Number 1, he is to be paid at the same rate as those labourers; in case Number 2, he is to be paid at the average rate of the adjoining plantations. But what if the employer takes care to put no free labourers on the work ordinarily done by Coolies? Test Number 1 does not apply. Or what if neigh-

* Report, &c., ¶ 251.

bouring planters are equally shrewd? Ditto. Or what if there are no adjacent plantations? We reach uncertainty again. Let us suppose a case in which —as is quite possible on some estates—no Creole labourer is employed either on, or in the neighbourhood of, the estate at such work as "weeding." A gang of Coolies then is told off to weed a field, the overseer offering six "bitts," *i.e.*, six fourpennies, for twelve beds. The immigrants demur. What is to be done? The standard does not exist: the Coolie must accept or strike. The latter course holds out to him the prospect of a summons before the magistrate, and fine or imprisonment: the former is yielding to terms dictated by the person most interested. A hard problem is this every way.

"Sometimes," says the Commissioners, "there are no Creoles at work under similar circumstances in the neighbourhood, and this happens the oftener, because much of the work of a sugar estate *is positively refused as a rule by the Creoles*, while of some kinds they have a practical monopoly." Clearly the Commissioners are right when they say that this must be taken as "a rough approximation to fairness, rather than as an infallible test of what is due."

Moreover, the standard as the planters fairly urge, is in one sense an improper one. The free labourer must maintain himself, and find his own doctor, and hospital, and house. It is illusory to expect a planter to pay a Coolie, for whom he is put to the expenses of indenture, houses, and hospitals, as much as he pays a better working free

labourer. I should expect to find the employer in practice trying to shirk this standard, and not to be solaced by the alleged counter-consolation that the supply of labour "is constant and continuous." I cannot but believe that the hundreds of quick-witted Coolies who came to me, and complained that their wages were below those of the Blacks, and that they had no alternative but to accept them, had some ground for their dissatisfaction. Nearly all their disputes with managers and all their riots seem to turn on this vexed point of wages. The Commissioners, though evidently not in love with the system, content themselves with saying "the convenience of it, in appealing to a rough sentiment of equality is so great, that it is not easy to suggest any amendment for the better." But it is perfectly clear that unless some amendment is suggested by some one and brought into practical operation, the establishment of enduring content among the immigrants is a doubtful—nay, an impossible—prospect.

The objections to the alternative, a fixed tariff, are strong. They are—its inflexibility in adaptation to individual cases, and the difficulty, when once it is established, to get the rate of wages raised or depressed in accordance with changes in the labour-market. On the other hand, such a schedule has this decided and supreme advantage, that disputes as to rates of wages can be immediately settled by a reference to it. Though in peculiar cases it may lead now and then to hardship, yet in the main, while the general body of labourers profit by it, it must

contribute to diminish the chances of agreement. It would give a fair average justice. My opinion is in favour of this method over the one in vogue in British Guiana, but I give it with diffidence. The maintenance of the present "free-trade" system creates difficulties which, I think, can be proved from the Report to be insuperable. Who is to settle the question of a disputed rate where the tests are wanting? The Immigration Agent-General at one time intervened with good effect in such cases; but his subordinates did not take his view of the policy of such an intervention. Mr. Gallagher "was careful in giving evidence to disclaim all knowledge which should enable him to decide these matters for himself." Accordingly the singular method was adopted of referring the Coolies' complaints at the Immigration Office of insufficient wages to the manager—that is, back to one of the parties concerned. The tender objection of the Acting Immigration Agent-General to placing the office in a "position of hostility" to the employers, seems to have prompted him to this "abdication of the functions of protector of immigrants," as the Commissioners very correctly term it.* But in several instances where strikes had occurred, the agents or magistrates adopted the plan of calling in neighbouring planters to arbitrate.

These arbitrations seem sometimes to have served their purpose. The objection to them was that the Coolies' side could not be said to be represented among the arbitrators, who were always employers. "Successful settlements of somewhat formidable

* Report, &c., ¶ 377.

strikes were effected by this means in many cases; for instance, [complaints followed by proceedings, No. 6 *Waterloo*, 18th August, 1869] a case which we have above noticed as the worst of the kind—in which it was decided by three managers as arbitrators, that while two of the subjects of complaint adduced afforded no ground for complaint, *some work was being paid for at a little more than half its value, and certain other work at two-thirds*, which in their opinion ought not to have been task-work at all." This discovery exhibited a sufficiently flagrant wrong; but one can scarcely read the *denouement* without some indignation. "The decision had to be followed up by proceedings before the magistrate. A summons was taken out by each of seven immigrants under the advice of the sub-agent of immigration. In two of these, judgment was given in favour of the immigrants, but the remainder were found to have been settled by the manager out of court. This is a strong instance of the effect of leaving the labourer with only a civil remedy for the recovery of wages. Five of these cases were dismissed upon its being found that the manager had settled the claim; and in these, of course, no costs could be recovered. It deserves consideration that the result in this case—that is to say, the recovery of two sums of $1.20 and $3.38 with costs, and the dismissal with costs of the five other cases—*is the only instance, so far as we know, of a dispute as to the rate of wages in which the immigrants were enabled to recover by the intervention of the Immigration Office in the Magistrates' Court;* and that before arriving at it,

there had been two inquiries and one arbitration on the estate, *several complaints from the Coolies addressed to all manner of authorities, and a strike of more than a fortnight*, during which the loss to the labourers must have been considerable, as well as to the estate." *

In the result the arbitration system thus conducted has failed,† the Coolies refusing to accept decisions by the class most interested in keeping down the rate of wages. The Commissioners therefore propose to invest the stipendiary magistrate with power to call in the assistance of experts, both planters and labourers, and to pay them for assisting him as assessors.‡ But it is rather confusing to find on the same page of the Report, following this recommendation, the statement: "In considering the administration of justice in the Magistrates' Court, we are brought face to face with a condition of things the gravity of which it is folly to extenuate. *Wherever we went we heard the immigrants loudly protesting a complete want of confidence in the Magistrates' impartiality.*‖

The second effect of the legislation, we have said, was to make the measure of a task one shilling's worth of work. "This was suggested, no doubt, by the long-established custom under which the day's task which could be enforced by law and a guilder's worth of work had been, since the times of the apprenticeship, considered as equivalent; but since it was not desired to press hardly on the Coolies, and since it might be said that their average was at least one quarter less per week of work or wages than that

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 379, 380. † Ib. ¶¶ 382—384.
‡ Ib., ¶ 384. ‖ Ib., ¶ 387.

of the black labourers in former times, it was decided by Sir Francis Hincks, in consultation with Mr. Gallagher, then Acting Immigration Agent-General," to fix the Coolie task upon this principle.*

The manager, then, can summon a Coolie for, "without reasonable cause," neglecting or refusing to begin the work required of him, or for leaving work begun unfinished, or for absence from work, or for not performing five tasks of one shilling in value in the week. This produces a curious situation. Suppose the employer requires the Coolie to begin work on Monday morning: the latter has before him six days in which to do his week's work. That work is five tasks. May he not do all these tasks in three days? May he not elect to begin his five days' work on Tuesday? Are the five tasks the limit of the employer's requirements?—In practice the employers seem not to have so recognised it. They summoned men under one or other of the provisoes, who did not commence work on Monday; they summoned men who had done five shillings' worth of work in five or less than five days. "We believe," says the Report, "that the right of standing idle for the rest of the week after finishing five tasks has not been, in fact, recognised by managers generally—we have no doubt that men are occasionally convicted of neglect or refusal to work, or of absence, who have, if the fact were ascertained, already done five shillings' worth of work during the week. *If, however, the fact came out in evidence, a conviction would hardly be obtained.*"† The critical reader will ask how, if a magistrate is alive to his

* Report, &c., ¶ 260. † Ib., ¶ 299.

duty, it is possible that the fact should not come out in evidence, unless the plaintiff's witnesses perjure themselves. The Commissioners suggest that the enactment in this respect needs amendment. In my opinion, if the clauses constituting offences were all abolished, and a new clause enacted, creating but one offence under this head, namely, a refusal to perform five, or even six, tasks on as many separate days of the week; the task and rate of wages to be regulated by a tariff: the tariff to be revised every six months by a committee consisting of the Governor, the Immigration Agent-General, two planters, and two labourers, annually selected by the immigrants—simplicity, justice, and contentment on both sides would be secured.

The lawful excuses for the above offences may here be briefly alluded to. One is that peculiar to a female, namely, that she is pregnant. Mr. Des Vœux has, in his letter, laid some stress on the employment of pregnant women, and I saw a woman who stated she had been committed to prison with *hard labour* by a magistrate, the result of which had been rather more literally to that effect than he intended it. But the Commissioners, I am glad to say, report the general charge to have been very fully refuted, and, in fact, speak in terms of approbation of the treatment of women in that condition on the estates.* This confirms my own impression.

Another just exception would be that of convalescents discharged from hospital, but not quite fit for work. These people give rise to very nice ques-

* Report, &c., ¶ 300, 574, 575.

tions. In cases where the defendant is obviously ill, the magistrates would send him back to the hospital. Under the Act 4 of 1864 it was made incumbent on the magistrate to make inquiry into the fitness to work of persons brought before him under sections 115, 116. Under the amending Ordinance 9 of 1868, the onus of raising the question was attempted to be thrown on the immigrant. This was a blunder. The Commissioners describe the difficulty, and animadvert upon it thus :—

"It is difficult actually to draw the line between a convalescent dismissed from hospital as cured, but in an unfit state for work, and one for whom, although not quite cured, some slight compulsion to exert himself is in the highest degree beneficial. On the one hand, the usual practice of sending a convalescent into the buildings to turn megass, or do some other slight work, within reach of shelter from the weather, is both humane and salutary. On the other, the plan followed by Mr. Bascom at Spring Garden, of employing a regular convalescent gang, under a black driver, is quite as clearly an excessive utilising of available labour. The number of convalescents, properly so called, is smaller than might be supposed, because the hospital, partaking rather of the nature of an infirmary, generally retains its inmates longer than a regular hospital would do, and although, in this respect, we have found instances in case-books which seem to show that vigilance is needed in the matter, we do not believe that the magistrates generally hold themselves bound to sentence a prisoner on the mere production of the

case-book containing the doctor's testimony to the discharge as cured of a man who is obviously still weak and infirm."* The faith which the Commissioners here put in the magistrates is clearly the "evidence of things not seen."

2. The laws also contain provisions against the desertion of immigrants. Originally this desertion was defined to be "absence without leave at the daily calling over of the muster-roll"—a ceremony then enjoined upon the manager, subject to a penalty not exceeding $24—"and absence from work for the space of seven days." The penalty on the immigrant was not to exceed $24, or one month's imprisonment. This provision was found impracticable in the working, as the immigrants would not attend, many of them preferring to begin work before six o'clock, the hour designated for roll-call by the ordinance. By Ordinance 9 of 1868, sec. 12, the option was given to the managers, after notice, to substitute another plan, described in a former page.† The notes in the overseer's books, transcribed into the pay-list, were made to constitute "*primâ facie* evidence of the matters required to be entered therein."

If a Coolie had absented himself from the plantation, the manager was bound to give notice of his absence to the police within forty-eight hours, in default of which a penalty of not more than $24 was to be imposed on him. This seems in practice to have gone the way of all planters' penalties. Its primary object was to prevent collusive desertion of weak or sickly labourers who might, for instance, when they

* Report, &c., ¶ 301. † Ante, p. 92. Report, &c., ¶ 265.

were felt to be a burthen on the estate, have been given $5 to run away, and whose identification would afterwards become a very difficult matter. We naturally step from the deserters to

3. The provisions for securing to the immigrants their liberty in cases where they had served their indenture, or in the cases where, during the week, they had completed their tasks. The 107th section of Ordinance 4 of 1864 enacted that—"Every employer of any immigrants under indenture, or the servant of such employer, or any police officer or rural constable, may apprehend without a warrant any such immigrant who may be found on any day and at any hour he may be bound to labour at a distance greater than two miles from the plantation on which such immigrant is under such contract to perform service, unless such immigrant has in his possession a *pass* signed by such employer, or by some person authorised by him to sign the same, certifying that such immigrant has been permitted so to absent himself." One exception to this strict law exists in the right of the Coolie to absent himself on reasonable grounds to complain to the Immigration Agent-General.

The confusion necessarily arising out of these enactments, taken with the others prescribing his work or the remedies of the employer, is not in favour of the Coolie. It has already been shown that for two years he was deprived, through magisterial inadvertence and the misunderstanding of the police, of the protection just mentioned; and, in addition to that, it was a very nice question what the "hour he may be bound to labour" implied. Supposing he had

completed five tasks, and was taking a holiday, could he be arrested in this summary manner? There is no doubt that in practice he was so arrested, and that the enactments as they stand are so incongruous and so indefinite, constitute so many forms of offence, that it is almost if not wholly impossible for a magistrate to decide the question. Brought up now under one, now under the other charge, for similar offences, the Coolie may well be confounded about a justice itself so confused and indeterminate. "The provision requiring the performance of five tasks is found to infringe one of the best principles of legislation, that no penal law should exist which is only occasionally put in force." There is a glaring injustice, as the law now stands, in arresting, at any distance from his plantation, a Coolie who has done his week's five tasks. The only evidence of that fact which would technically excuse him from arrest would be a pass signed by his employer. But the granting of this pass is not enjoined on the employer, any more than the right to enforce its delivery to him is conferred on the immigrant. Hence the freedom of the indentured labourer at times when he is not bound to work is not insured. The Commissioners have recommended, contrary to my suggestion on a previous page, that the five-shilling task should be struck from the statute-book, and that the charge of "neglecting or refusing to work" and of "absence from work" should be left to be the means of enforcing labour from the Coolie. This, of course, must be the remedy for the present confusion if the existing system of estimating and laying down work is to be

maintained; but it is matter of grave doubt whether that can be patched up for permanency.

The immigrant who has completed his indenture and is free in law is still, owing to the peculiar necessities of the system, not quite so in fact. He must carry about with him a "certificate of industrial service," countersigned by the Immigration Agent-General; in default of which he is liable to be arrested, and to be detained until he is identified. Should he lose this valuable document—the patent of his freedom—he must pay $5 for a duplicate.

I do not know that this disability on freed-men can, consistently with maintaining discipline throughout the colony, be removed. But, while sufficient proof is demanded that a certificate has been lost, no charge should be made for the duplicate.

To remedy the former disability, the laws defining the offences of *absence* and *desertion*, if they are to remain, require to be more accurately drawn. The right to demand a pass on certain contingencies should be peremptorily laid down; the right to grant one summarily should be given to stipendiary magistrates, who now sometimes assume it; and the power of arrest should be guarded by very strict and careful provisoes. Indeed, it should be the aim of legislation to confer upon the Coolie, and to protect at all events, the *maximum* of liberty consistent with an honest performance of his contract. The policy of legislation has hitherto been rather to remind him of the force of his bonds than to render them so light as that he may almost be unconscious of them.

Some managers, Mr. Des Vœux alleged, stated it as a rule of their management, that an immigrant must either be at work, in hospital, or in gaol on their estates:

"—more than one manager has expressed his opinion that the rule does, in fact, fairly represent the obligation it is expedient to enforce upon an immigrant. This is Mr. Russell's opinion, and a similar one was expressed by Mr. Daly, of Vergenoegen, and Mr. Bascom, of Cove and John.

"There is perhaps some ground for apprehension that a manager who propounds the general rule in harsh-sounding and injudiciously-sweeping language, will be rather less likely to be indulgent in the concession of leave to immigrants in giving them holidays, in letting them off when charged and liable to be sent to gaol, and in tolerating some laxity of obedience to the rule of labour, where there is grass to cut for a cow, or some other private pursuit not carried to excess.

"Mr. Des Vœux asserts, broadly, that the estates are governed, with a very few notable exceptions, not by kindness and good treatment, but through the fear of the severity of the law. We are convinced that there *is, in fact, more kindness and good treatment than he is disposed to allow;* but *that the system is one under which the immigrants are too much governed through fear of the severity of the law, we shall shortly have occasion to show.*" *

4. Lastly.—Under this head, there are the provisions against the destruction of the employer's

* Report, &c., ¶ 302.

property. The Coolie who loses or damages the *property* of his employer by negligence, or carelessness, or other improper conduct, or by "a careless and improper use of fire," or who "wantonly and cruelly illtreats animals belonging to his employer, or, *by negligence or carelessness*, shall suffer or cause the same to be wantonly beaten, &c. (?)"—is liable to a penalty not exceeding $24, or one month's imprisonment; and, if twice convicted, to a fine not exceeding $48, or two months' imprisonment.*

Some of these provisions seem to overlap the criminal law, since an improper use of fire would seem to be very characteristic of arson, while the "negligence" of "suffering" an animal to be "wantonly beaten" is an ingenuity in legislative definition well worthy another special ordinance to explain it. The burning of "logies" stocked with the dry megass is one of the most facile and malicious methods of revenge, and one frequently employed by a people of so few moral notions as the immigrants. It is one, moreover, to be punished with the utmost rigour, and no penalty short of death or torture would be too great for a destruction which hampers the productive power of the estate, and often imperils the whole of its machinery. But lighter negligences or carelessnesses need more accurate definition, since the spoiling of a box of sugar by an accident may expose a hand to penalties exceeding a hundredfold such claims as it needs very gross carelessness on the part of a domestic servant in England to enable a master to enforce.

* Ordinance 4 of 1864, sec. 19.

CHAPTER XX.

THE COOLIE'S REMEDIES AGAINST HIS EMPLOYER.

THE employer is bound by the law we have cited to provide the immigrant with suitable and sufficient dwelling-house and hospital accommodation, and to secure to him, when sick, suitable and sufficient medical attendance, medicines, maintenance, and the services of a competent nurse; to pay him weekly, on a fixed day and without deduction, wages at the same rate as the wages paid to the Creole and other unindentured labourers on the same or adjacent plantations, &c.

Summary remedies against the employers for failing in these particulars are, as the Commissioners say, "conspicuous by their absence." There is one enactment in these terms: "If any employer shall in any way ill-use any immigrants, on being convicted thereof he shall be deemed guilty of an offence, and shall pay a fine not exceeding the sum of forty-eight dollars, or be imprisoned, with or without hard labour, for any time not exceeding two months, or pay such fine and be so imprisoned." "It is a very strange assertion," said Mr. Crosby, "but that is the

only protective section in the whole of this ordinance." The employer's penalty for ill-using his labourer is, as regards the fine ($ 48), only twice that imposed on the Coolie for ill-using his master's property, while the imprisonment is equal. Moreover, the vagueness of the term "ill-usage" would probably prove too hard a problem for magisterial solution.

With regard to hospital treatment and proper dwellings, the Coolie himself can, it appears, set in motion legal action against his master for providing improper medicines, diet, &c.* But he never does. In practice that is left entirely to the Executive, and their management of it will be presently considered. Meanwhile I may point out that the Trinidad Ordinance also gives the Coolie the right to initiate a proceeding upon the failure of the employer to send him to hospital, if he requires medical treatment—the penalty, on conviction, not exceeding ten pounds.† It is clear, throughout, that a stronger hand has been at work in Trinidad than in British Guiana.

For any failure to pay him his wages the immigrant's remedy is a restricted one.‡ Under the Petty Debts Ordinance alone he may, in the case of work actually done and wages actually earned, enforce his claim. Under the section, whereby reduced tasks are to be assigned to those who are incompetent to perform full work, the immigrant has no remedy for the employer's default to provide it. "Turning to the parts of the Act intended to enforce its substantive

* Ordinance 4 of 1864, secs. 151 and 154.

† Trinidad Ordinance 13 of 1870, sec. 37.

‡ Report, &c., ¶ 253.

provisions, we find provision for enforcing the payment of wages conspicuous by its absence. It does not seem to have been intended to give to the indentured immigrant by this Act the power of suing for wages under the magistrates' summary jurisdiction." Practically then, he has no remedy. Yet of all his complaints the one most frequently made is that of a stoppage of wages. By this is not meant a refusal to pay any wages, but a deduction made at the pay-table for alleged imperfection or incompleteness in executing his task. The injustice of such a custom arises from the fact that in nine cases out of ten no test of the accuracy of this deduction can be applied. The task may have been done early in the week. No objection may have been taken to it at the time: nevertheless an overseer's note in his book or the report of a driver may be accepted as conclusive evidence of unfinished or ill-executed work. The Coolies alleged that this was constantly done, and the Commissioners bear them out in the assertion.

It is right that the exact words of the Report should be given. "Stoppages for one reason and another are, on most estates, everyday occurrences. The immigrants complain bitterly that they do not know what they are to get, that they have no notice, that there is no rule, and that the manager does what the driver tells him. In all this there is much exaggeration and some truth."* They then point out that the greater part of the stoppages so called are deferred payments for unfinished work. The only legal stop-

* Report, &c., ¶ 447.

pages are under section 11 Ordinance 9 of 1868, by which the manager or overseer was enjoined to take note of bad or unfinished work and to call on the defaulter to complete it; and on his failure to do this might hand it over to another to finish, withholding payment from the defaulting immigrant. But the planters went beyond this proviso. For instance, on Plantation Industry sixteen cents. was deducted for any day except Saturday when an immigrant absented himself without leave.* In another case, $1.84 was stopped from the wages of thirty-one shovelmen to pay "for a fork." *The money was subtracted week by week, and after three months seven out of the thirty-one were still in debt to the estate.*† The worst case is entered in the Report:—"Visit to Plantation Zeelugt —Regular System of Stoppages, &c.—On another estate the stoppages were till recently very regularly entered. There were entries of 'stopped temp.,' which, of course, indicated deferred payments, and of 'stopped perm.,' which covered stoppages proper. An account-book as between manager and overseer was produced, in which 'amounts deferred' was a regular entry; sums varying from $3 to $34 appeared to have been stopped either temporarily or permanently in each week of June and July last, and *no satisfactory explanation*, either from memory or from documents, was vouchsafed to the Commissioners of the circumstance. This, however, we believe to have been an extreme case, and it is not surprising that the name of this estate has figured more than once in the recent disturbances." The

* Report, &c., ¶ 454. † Ib., ¶ 456.

name of this estate should figure no more among the recipients of Coolies. These are the cases to be visited by the Governor's supreme power. If, fired by such injustice as this, the immigrants should have fallen on the manager in question and written their sense of wrong upon his body in some cruel characters, their penalty would have been very properly ten years at Massaruni; but it is a frightful anomaly that if they did not take that method of remedying the injury there was no other open to them. When Coolies are living from hand to mouth, as many of them are, the stoppage of their wages on the Saturday is a very serious matter for them. The law decidedly implies that whatever a man has earned during the week he should receive on the pay day.

We therefore put our finger on a great defect in the laws, when we find that provisions for asserting this right are denied to the Coolie—a defect so flagrant and perilous as to call for immediate remedy. That remedy must correspond with the remedy of the employer against the Coolie, and be *penal*.* Further, when he charges the employer with an illegal stoppage of wages and succeeds, the latter should be deprived of the power, which it seems to be admitted he now has, of bringing a counter-charge for insufficiency of work, and in his turn succeeding.† There needs also a more stringent condition as to the time and manner in which the employer is to take note of the insufficiency of work,‡ a matter of no small consequence in a colony where a "tropical shower" may change the aspect of work in two or three hours.

* Report, &c., ¶ 473. † Ib., ¶ 474. ‡ Ib., ¶ 475.

Such are the very proper and peremptory suggestions of the Commissioners.

Perhaps, among the forty unlucky sections, which Mr. Crosby tells us were "struck out at one swoop" by the Court of Policy, these remedies were withdrawn from the immigrant. The absence of such provisions is the more significant because, in 1853-54, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir George Grey, distinctly refused to sanction the Bill which became Ordinance 7 of 1854, because "the most important clauses of the ordinances of previous years, which imposed penalties on the employer for non-performance of his duties, were silently expunged."* The provision was reinstated in that ordinance, to be again *silently expunged* in Ordinance 4 of 1864, without any remark, apparently, from the then Colonial Secretary. "It seems," says the Report, "somewhat strange that while so much jealousy was exhibited by the Home Government at the omission of any such provision from successive Acts, this particular one—certainly not the least important—should have been tacitly allowed to disappear in 1853 from the general Labour Code, and in 1864 from that relating to immigration."

In proceeding under the Petty Debt Ordinance the Coolie is restricted, we have said, to recovering wages actually due; but that would premise an admission by him of the terms of the labour or the rate of wages. He cannot raise the question of the equity of the rate

* Papers relating to Immigration to the West Indian Colonies, presented to Parliament August, 1857, pp. 55, 169. Quoted by the Commissioners, ¶ 254.

in this proceeding. Hence it is only in rare cases that he can avail himself of this limited remedy. One of the magistrates is of opinion that properly even this is not open to him!*

To add to the legal hotch-potch, by a technical arrangement of late legislation the free immigrant, who formerly had remedies under the Employers and Servants Ordinance of 1853, has been deprived of them, and has no higher advantages than his indentured fellow-countrymen.

For claims ranging from $24 to $240 resort may be had to the Inferior Court of Civil Justice established in 1856.† This court, however, is for the rich, and not for the poor. The legislators of British Guiana have legislated wholesomely against litigation. The expenses of "service of citations, summonses, taking up sentence, &c.," are heavy. As only ten per cent. on the amount of sentence can be recovered as taxed costs for counsel's fee, it is practically impossible to retain counsel. The Commissioners quote a return of the proportion of Coolie cases in this court.

	1867.	1868.	1869.
Totals . . .	423	424	463 of which
Immigrants .	28	45	45

When we come to examine the machinery by which alone the Coolie can enforce his claims upon an employer, we find that he is offered very few facilities for exercising his litigious faculty. He has, under any circumstances, but a slight chance of becoming acquainted with a law not translated into his

* Mr. Huggins's evidence, *Q.* 7755, Report, &c., ¶ 256.
† Report, &c., ¶ 218.

own language, and in its original sufficiently puzzling to an Englishman. The expense of securing legal assistance is inordinate. Whether the reason be the general dearness of the colony or the superlative quality of the law provided, the fees absorbed by the barrister-attorneys of Georgetown would make a decent Q.C.'s mouth water. Forty dollars and expenses is a fee for attending a court seven miles out of town, and very frequently Coolies mentioned to me that they had given "Massa" So-and-so $20, $30, or $50. The Bar is not very extensive. There are an Attorney and Solicitor-General, both able and accomplished gentleman, and two white juniors, waiting, I presume, for those lucrative posts. A clever and lively Irish barrister, who gaily wavered between the courts and the newspapers in alternate legal and literary spasms, has I believe left the colony, and two or three black or coloured practitioners complete the legal tale. There are also attorneys. But I suppose no practitioner in the colony would look at $5, which would be an ample fee for a Coolie to pay in most of his cases, and mayhap for the assistance to be obtained by it.

The reader will observe it as a favourable sign that Coolies are to be found with $30, $40, or $50 to expend in litigation. But, on the other hand, few can accomplish this; and even the occasions on which they take up a general subscription to help each other must be rare. It might, perhaps, be well to encourage a few Hindu barristers to settle down in British Guiana. They might be guaranteed a certain

amount by the Indian or Colonial Government; or might form part of that body of immigrants' counsel which I have proposed should be maintained in the colony. Their acquaintance with the language and ways of their people would enable them to render great assistance, not only in vindicating their rights, but also, one would hope, in allaying their discontent. The cases of injustice arising out of the inefficient way in which a Coolie necessarily puts his own case* before a magistrate would, were he provided with legal assistance, be rendered impossible.

When the Coolie appears in court, his difficulties are aggravated should he, as nearly all the new and many of the old Coolies are, be unacquainted with English.—*En parenthèse*, here I may mention that if he knows English he declines to speak it at his peril: witness this incident, related of himself by Mr. Ware, a stipendiary:—

Q. On the 27th of August do you remember locking up a witness for four hours on a Saturday because he refused to speak English?—Yes. He was locked up for about an hour. There was evidence before me that the man could speak English well, and I looked upon his refusal as *a contempt of court (?)*, but he was not fined.

Q. Did he speak English when he came out?—When he came out, I told him he had better consider whether he would speak English at the next court, and he then uttered several words. The inter-

* See the incident related in Chapter VIII. *ante*, of a vain appeal to an ordinance.

preter who was present said the man spoke English fluently. He was an old Coolie.—

To return to the Coolies. Those who are not stubbornly disinclined to use English, but are incapable of doing so, must plead and conduct their case through the interpreters of the court. These persons themselves speak the most indifferent English, and are paid only $24 a month. The Coolies told us they were obliged to pay these men to get them to interpret fairly; and their low position and native cupidity lay them open to convenient *douceurs* from drivers or overseers who want to show something to the managers for the day's justice. Mr. Alves, one of the acting stipendiary magistrates, possessed of some knowledge of Hindustani, instanced a case within his own experience where an interpreter pleaded "guilty" for a man who had pleaded "not guilty."

Very properly do the Commissioners comment on the absolute necessity of remedying this evil, in order to make the administration of law for the Coolie as pure as possible. "It is easy to see how far *a few decisions*, either known or suspected to have been brought about by false interpreting of the evidence, would go to impair confidence in the administration of justice. Want of acquaintance with the laws and forms of law, inexperience of European habits, and a general defect of moral courage, are disadvantages for which nothing can compensate the immigrants save care and patience [they might have added, and immaculate independence] in the presiding magistrate. They are not greater, however, in their case than in that of

many others, between whom and Europeans justice has been done by European judges."*

In his defences the Coolie is yet more heavily ironed. The notorious profligacy of deceit common to his people, and the necessarily strong and too little riddled evidence of the estate's staff, place him in a singularly helpless situation. The Commissioners say: "Great pains appear to us to be taken by the magistrates to explain and afford to him the facilities to which he is entitled by law." I have already commented on and admitted the difficulty of the magistrate's position, but it seems futile to hope for any improvement unless the Coolie is legally represented at the trial.

It is part of the overseer's duty to appear against the immigrants at the police-court, the manager's attendance being seldom required. The Commissioners think "it is to be feared that it is considered as much a duty of the overseer to get the men fined or imprisoned, whom he appears against, as to get the work done which he takes down." They instance a case in which a manager was summoned for assaulting a Chinese. The case was adjourned in order that the manager might summon another overseer, *the one he took with him having sworn that he did not see what occurred.* It was suggested that the overseer was dismissed in consequence; but this, in the Commissioners' opinion, was disproved. "Still it appears that *it never entered the head of the manager to ask the overseer whether he had seen all that took place*

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 390, 391.

before summoning him as sole witness—a mistake that might have cost him dear. In fact, he took his overseer's evidence for granted. It is almost needless to observe that such a question is a different thing from asking a defendant beforehand 'what evidence he could give.' This taking of evidence for granted is the bane of justice as between class and class." *

And lastly, as a culmination of his disabilities, the Coolie *defendant cannot, under the Immigration Ordinances, give evidence in his own case.* Perhaps nothing will more startle the reader of these pages than to learn that in a matter professedly of civil contract the mouth of the unfortunate defendant contractor is shut. "It was pointed out to us," say the Commissioners,† "by Mr. Huggins that an immigrant defendant under the Labour Law, although tried for a breach of contract, which is a civil offence, *nevertheless is made to occupy the position of a criminal.* It may perhaps be conjectured that this anomaly has crept in to some extent by accident. In the old days of free labour which succeeded the apprenticeship, the difficulty of compelling a labourer to work was found insurmountable. 'I conceive,' said Mr. Brumell, now sheriff of Demerara (as quoted in the Report of Governor Barkly's Commission, published in 1850), 'that there can be no strict enforcement of a contract between two parties, one of whom is known and responsible, and the other unknown, and possessing only a cloth round his loins.' This often-repeated argument for a penal contract law, when reinforced by considerations

* Report, &c., ¶ 307. † Ib., ¶ 394, 395.

peculiar to the case of an immigrant under indenture, who has a debt to work out to his employer and to the estate, was sufficient to justify the substitution of penalties, such as fine and imprisonment, in the place of damages, by way of sanction to a contract. But it is hard to see by what logic the liability to fine and imprisonment, even with hard labour, should of necessity draw with it all those incidents which the English law attaches to the position of a man charged with a criminal offence. The indentured labourer finds himself convicted often upon the sole evidence of his employer or a subordinate; he is not allowed to give evidence in his own behalf. It is true, it might not make much difference in the case if he were. As it is, a good magistrate will always ask him for his defence, and show by his demeanour that whether or not he accepted it as true, he at least regards it with consideration. But we may be perfectly sure that there is no immigrant so deficient in the instinct of justice as not to perceive, so soon as he begins to perceive anything of the manner in which business is carried on, that he, the defendant, and his employer, the prosecutor, have not equal rights of telling their respective stories before the law.

"If the converse case of the rule came within their experience—if they were in the habit of bringing charges against managers, and of seeing them tongue-tied whilst their character was sworn away—they might recognise an even-handedness, if not an equity, in the law. But as a matter of their daily experience, a few exceptions set aside, the penal enforcement of

the Labour Law has hitherto been an enforcement against the labourer alone."

When we come to review the work done in the magistrates' courts, we get a fair idea of the immigrant's legal disabilities. The entire number of the charges under the Immigration Ordinances before stipendiary magistrates in the colony, for five years ending June 30, 1870, is returned at 32,876. Of these the Report says "*certainly not a hundred, perhaps not a score*, were cases by immigrants, or by others on their behalf, against employers; and the charges brought by officials against employers under the same Acts may be almost counted on the fingers of one hand. It follows from this that the immigrants must look upon the Court as a place for doing justice rather upon them than to them; and although no one can wish to see their charges against their employers multiplied, yet it must be allowed that the number brought by the employers against them is, apart from all comparisons, large, and even excessive. This is not the case in Mauritius. The charges brought by immigrants against employers bear comparison in number with those brought by employers against them; showing that it is not impossible to get them to regard the magistrate's court as a protection to themselves." *

Both principle and policy demand that to the rigid powers conferred on the employer, of enforcing his contract against the Coolie the latter should have corresponding facilities against the former: on prin-

* Report, &c., ¶ 397.

ciple, as a simple matter of equal justice between two contracting parties; on policy, because the greater the facilities of maintaining his rights afforded the Coolie the less will be the likelihood of their invasion, as the less will be the inducement to attempt it.

We thus see that practically almost every method of asserting or of defending his rights by law is absent from the immigrant. He is in the hands of a system which elaborately twists and turns him about, but always leaves him face to face with an impossibility. Until I had read the Commissioners' Report I had not fairly realised that the situation was so bad as it is proved to be. With such blots upon the legislation of British Guiana, with such miserably inadequate provision of remedies for those whose terrible disadvantage should have been an appeal to legislative sympathies, if not to the legislators' sense of right, it is not to be wondered at if there is disquiet in the Coolie camp and trepidation among the employers. I should be sorry to see any people so successfully degraded as to sit down quietly under disadvantages so monstrous. I should be sorry to see any English Governor venturing to avail himself of an armed police force and Enfield rifles to suppress the righteous indignation of people subjected to these disabilities. And I shall be astonished if an English Government and an English public, learning of these things, do not very determinedly, very quietly, without the least fanaticism in the world, set themselves to see that they are remedied.

CHAPTER XXI.

WAGES.

IT will be necessary to enter somewhat minutely into the details afforded by the Commissioners of the wages-rates in the colony. They investigated these points with great thoroughness, and with results rather surprising to any one who had heard the evidence of Mr. Oliver, a gentleman deservedly occupying a high position in the colony and at the head of one of its principal firms. The local Defence Committee established by the planters had issued a series of papers to the managers of the various estates calling for certain returns, with the anticipated purpose of refuting Mr. Des Vœux's exaggerated charges. These returns were with great labour, and in the most admirably business-like way, tabulated for presentation to the Commissioners, Mr. Oliver, as chairman of the committee, producing them, and lending the authority of his own faith in them. His high character rendered him, personally, quite free from suspicion, but unfortunately the Commissioners deemed it their duty to test the practical value of these returns, and the dry and caustic way in which

they dispose of some of them is peculiarly significant. As the wages question is one upon which depends not only the subordinate, yet important, question of justice or injustice to the Coolie himself, in that matter of officially representing the average earnings in the colony to be "easily" from 1*s.* 4*d.* to 4*s.* a day—but also the larger, and to us more serious, question whether the average is still sufficient to sustain a further immigration, I transcribe from the Report the analysis of this part of Mr. Oliver's evidence :—

"Form No. 2—professes to give the average daily earnings for the year of all classes of immigrants, estimated for the days on which they have actually been at work. The immigrants are divided into men, women, and children, and again subdivided into effectives and non-effectives. Mr. Oliver gives the following summary :—

"'With regard to Form No. 2, I may observe that it has not any special reference to Mr. Des Vœux's letter; but we have obtained the information as a guide to the Commissioners when they go into the country. They will then have an opportunity of checking the returns by personal inquiry and observation. The returns from 115 estates show that the effective Indian immigrants, the better class of male Coolies, effectives, we call them, earn on an average 34·94 cents, or as nearly as possible 35 cents a day. Ineffectives, the weak, sickly people, earn only 20 cents a day, effective women 25 cents, ineffectives 15½ cents, and children 13 cents. Of the Chinese under indenture, effective men earn 35 cents, non-effectives

20 cents, effective women 26 cents, ineffectives 15 cents, and children 13 cents. These are the people under indenture on estates.'

"The ineffectives are said to be—

"'All who are able to do work, not those in hospital, but all the weak and sickly, who are not yet able to go out and do some amount of work. Now as to the free people resident on estates. Coolies first: effective men earn on an average 35½ cents, ineffectives 21 cents, effective women 25 cents, ineffective 16½ cents, and children 13 cents. Of free Chinese, the effective men earn 38½ cents, ineffective 24 cents, effective women 25½ cents, ineffective 17 cents, and children 13 cents.'

"We notice that the instructions sent with this return were hardly definite enough. They run, 'You will observe that we have divided the immigrants into two classes, effective and non-effective. We would suggest that your best mode of arriving at the result would be to take the total amount paid to the man or woman, as the case may be, for the last twelve months, and divide by the number of days at work, two half-days to count as one whole day.' No rule is given for the classification into effectives and non-effectives, which has accordingly been carried out on the most various principles, even by the most careful of the compilers; Mr. Field, for instance, counting 98 per cent. of his male immigrants as effectives, while Mr. Kelly makes out 29 per cent. of non-effectives.

"Without going into a detailed examination of these returns, we think it necessary, before putting forward

our own somewhat different conclusions, to point out a few of the statements and figures which render them as a whole untrustworthy.

"*a.* The sum entered on the return from Plantation Cumings Lodge as the average daily earnings throughout the year of effective male indentured Indian immigrants for each day on which work was done was 64 *cents*. The abstract we have ourselves made of the pay-list on this estate shows that *none of the indentured labourers*, drivers excepted, *could have earned more than* 46 *cents as a daily average*, and that only the best man earned that sum per diem on the days that he was actually at work. This is taking the number of days he worked during the year at 260, which is but a moderate estimate for the best man on the estate. The mistake is easily accounted for. We were informed when we visited the plantation that the return had not been taken from an actual analysis of the pay-list, but was rather an estimate of what it was known a good man could earn. There is a foot-note to the table:—'The system on which the books of this estate are kept (?) renders it impossible to give this return correctly.'

"*b.* Another return, that of the Bel Air estate, gives the rate of wages for the same class of immigrants at 56 cents a day. On examining the return we found that only about half the real number of residents on the estate had been accounted for, among the several divisions by which the total earnings of the pay-list had been reduced into daily rates of wages.

"*c.* On Plantation Schoon Ord the daily wages of

the same class were entered at 48 cents. Two hundred and sixty-three men were entered at this rate, and Mr. Arnold stated before us, in evidence, that these men generally averaged four days' work in the week; therefore, supposing them to have worked 200 days in the year, their total earnings would be 200 × 263 × 48 cents, or $25,428. In referring to Form No. 14 in the series where the total earnings is given of the whole body of male Indian immigrants, indentured and unindentured, effective and ineffective, together, we find it stated that only $10,471, that is to say at two-fifths of the sum that at 48 cents per working day, ought to have been earned by the effective indentured males only. The return No. 14 is not likely to be incorrect so far as immigrants are concerned, as it is easily obtained from the totals entered in the pay-lists of estates, which are regularly carried forward to the end of the year. This return Mr. Arnold considers must be correct, within a very few dollars. Here again the discrepancy was accounted for, when Mr. Arnold informed us, on the occasion of our visit to the estate, that he had made out Form No. 2 from his own knowledge of what an effective East Indian labourer could earn, without going through the laborious process of taking out the averages from his pay-lists.*

"It appears to us from our inquiries on estates that scarcely any of these returns were really made out from analysis of the pay-lists. Some were made up

* See another more detailed and correct statement of wages by the proprietor, *ante*, pp. 65, 66.

by ascertaining the rates earned by five or six of the men, known to be regularly earning good wages, without allowance for the deficiencies of others; and the rest of the same class, numbering often from one to three hundred, were then set down at the same rate. In some cases when the rates were really taken from the pay-lists, it was found that the days spent at work were not separately entered, but only the amount paid when a man had finished a certain piece of work. For instance, there might be only one entry for a whole week of 20 bitts, or $1.60, which the labourer could not have earned in less than three or four days. In most of these cases the number of days worked had been estimated by guess. Finally, too many of the returns sent in presented the unsatisfactory aspect, in a statistical sense, of a series of round numbers.

"What has been said of the Indian immigrants applies equally to the Chinese. The danger of relying upon a series of returns of this character, unless they are *bonâ fide* extracts from documents, lies in the tendency to confound the real average with what is called 'a good average rate of earnings'—meaning the average earned by a good man working well. To this tendency there is, in fact, no corrective; so that the taking of a great number of estates together is no security, as sometimes happens in taking averages, for correctness.*

"Form No. 5 attempts to show the amount a really able-bodied agricultural labourer, whether Indian

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 55—62.

Chinese, African, or Creole, would earn at field labour, working forty-five hours in the week. The average is given at $3.30. It will be seen from another part of this Report that an effective male immigrant can earn at taskwork in the field about 5 cents an hour. This makes only $2.25 a week. One employer considers that such a labourer, a Coolie, could earn 8*s.* in the time; others put it at 20*s.*, and one actually at 30*s.* The week of six days, at seven and a half hours a day, is taken as the full amount of what all able-bodied men might do. It deserves to be remembered that this is not timework, but taskwork. It is done under greater pressure, and more is done in the time. Without allowing for the climate, it represents more work than would be done in the same time in England; allowing for the climate, it represents a larger time spent at work than the employers, as a fact, expect. However, we do not say that it is beyond the capacity of an able-bodied Coolie to work seven hours and a half daily for six days in the week.

"But Mr. Oliver says, 'To do a task only occupies about four hours,' and calculates that twelve tasks might be done in the week. This is correct of the Negro; but an ordinary able-bodied Coolie could not do a task in four hours, or nearly so. In fact, hardly any of them could. The stress of taskwork will be best appreciated by remembering that the Coolies prefer from thirteen to sixteen hours' work in the buildings where they are not pressed to seven hours' work in the field where they are.'" *

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 67, 68.

The verdant indifference to facts exhibited by some of the managers in drawing up these returns strikes me with regret as one of the most discreditable features of the whole inquiry, and is made worse by the egregious deception thus practised by their subordinates upon Mr. Oliver, and the very respectable Committee who were made to stand sponsors for statements so irresponsible. It may be that the form in which the blank schedules were made out misled the rural managers—as, for instance, the instruction in No. 11, which, said its issuers, "is *for the purpose of showing* that the importation of Coolies, instead of lowering the rate of wages, has increased it." It is just possible the managers may have conceived this to be a direction to prove the proposition, instead of to state the facts. In effect they did neither. "The size of the task during the time of slavery [A] differed from that during the apprenticeship [B] and many customary tasks set at the present day differ materially in magnitude from both. The consequent dilemma was solved by the managers of estates in a variety of ways. Most of them followed column B, a few A, and some took for granted the dimensions customary on their own estates. It is obvious that a general average calculated on such data represents, in fact, nothing at all." *

The Commissioners report upon the wages under two heads:—1. The rates usually paid for the performance of given quantities of work. 2. The sums

* Report, &c., ¶ 78.

generally earned by immigrants and others, daily, weekly, or hourly.

1. To understand the work hereinafter designated under this head, the reader will only have to turn to the descriptions of estate-work in Chapter IV. The field work is paid by the task.

Digging trenches, 12 ft. wide and 5 ft. deep, per rod of 12¼ ft., 80c. to 96c.
Digging new small drains, 2 ft. wide and 2 ft. deep, per rod, 4c. to 8c. or 5c. to 6c.
Clearing out small drains, 1 ft. or 1 shovel, per rod, 1c., 1½c., and 2c.
Drilling, 1 shovel deep and 2 ft. wide, for 3 rods, 8c.
Weeding and moulding, } according to ground, &c., per acre, $2.00,
Weeding and trashing, } $2.50, $3.00, $3.50.
"Relieving" (*i.e.*, ranging loose trash on trash banks), per acre, $2.10 to $2.50.
Cane-cutting, per cord, 48c. to 54c.; per judge punt, 96c. to $1.08.

The Commissioners explain: "The rates we have given for field work are those generally paid. It is impossible to fix a given rate for any kind of work, and hold to it in all cases. The state of the weather, the nature of the soil, and condition of the field must all be taken into account. This, in cases of disputes between employers and labourers, can only be done by some experienced person visiting the field when the question arises, inspecting the work done, and estimating to the best of his ability what the value of the work is."

The work in the buildings, being of a totally different character from that in the field, is paid differently. Long as are the hours sometimes in these steaming places, the immigrants prefer the work to any on the estate. The measure of work is the number of clarifiers or "boxes" of juice made

in a day. Should this number, which, I believe, is usually forty, not be reached, there is a deduction from the day's wages; should they be exceeded, on most plantations the workmen are paid something extra. In case the machinery breaks down, the alternative is given to the Coolies to take to field work, or be paid only a proportionate amount, and go home. The stories told me by immigrants of the tremendous strain sometimes put upon them in the buildings are confirmed by the Report. I used to see the smoking chimneys which told of grinding going on late at night, and the first streak of dawn in the morning showed them to be still, or early again, at work. A gentleman very highly esteemed in the colony, and a thorough friend of the planters, told me that the excessive work in the buildings was one of the evils of the system.

The employers get on without any difficulty, because work in the buildings is better liked than field work. They are occasionally tempted by the facilities this predilection affords them to exact too much labour; sometimes without giving extra pay.* "It is not uncommon, especially on the Saturdays and last days of a bout of work, for fire to be put to the engine at three a.m., or even earlier, for the gangs *to be called at four* and *to be kept working till near midnight.* We have even found instances of twenty-three hours' continuous labour without any relay of labourers, and we have noticed the carelessness and waste produced by excess of labour demoralising a gang." "The average number

* Report, &c., ¶ 342.

of hours is about fifteen a day; but we have found instances where they had been working for eighteen to twenty-two hours without a change of hands and without any extra pay given. This was the case on *Skeldon*, *Canefield*, *Johanna Cecilia*, and *Leonora* estates." *

"This is one among many instances which show that the ability to contract on equal terms with his employer is not within reach of the indentured immigrant, and serves to establish the conclusion that all—even the minutest operations of the system—must be subjected to official supervision and control. We consider that work in the buildings ought to be paid for by time, and not by the task. Almost every employer we have spoken to on the subject says the immigrants prefer work in the buildings to that in the field. It seems, therefore, that there would not be much difficulty in getting them to work steadily by the hour. Work in the buildings would be held out as a reward to good labourers." † Moreover, the Commissioners complain that on the estates where defective machinery, &c., led to long hours, the immigrants were not paid more than on others where this was not the case. The rates in the buildings are as follows:—

Engineers, carpenters, coopers, &c.	per day	60c. to $1.00
Head boilermen	,,	56c. ,, 64c.
Firemen	,,	40c. ,, 48c.
Millfeeders (for cane-traveller)	,,	32c. ,, 48c.
Cane-throwers	,,	24c. ,, 32c.
Boxmen, for carrying off damp megass	,,	32c. ,, 40c.
Liquor pump men or lads	,,	20c. ,, 32c.
As clarifiers, men and lads	,,	16c. ,, 40c.
In distillery	,,	20c. ,, 48c.

* Report, &c., ¶ 363. † ¶ 343.

Porters, by job	per day	32c.	to 48c.
At centrifugals—feeding them and watering sugar (a skilful operation)	,,	32c.	,, 40c.
Female sugar carriers—"common process" . .	,,	24c.	,, 40c.
Megass carriers—women generally	,,	24c.	,, 32c.
Digging and packing megass	,,	32c.	
Children and convalescents spreading megass . .	,,	12c.	,, 24c.

"At *Zeelugt* we found a Coolie man employed as head pan-boiler, who was under indenture, and only paid 48 cents a day, which was much less than a Negro or other person would have accepted. The manager, Mr. Menzies, said he had paid $50 to have him taught to work the pan; but even taking this into consideration the pay was too little, for the manager would save about $70 to $80 the first year after his apprenticeship." (Par. 345.) This is the same estate with regard to which the severe animadversion of the Commissioners on stoppages of wages has before been quoted.

Whatever may be thought about the field work, the buildings' work seems to be of a kind that would best be carried on under a fixed tariff.

2. The tables of average earnings prepared by the Commissioners have not as yet been published; but the general results of their analysis are extremely pertinent. They first compare the returns on two great estates—*Albion* and *Great Diamond*.* "On *Albion* effective male Indian adults average 32½ cents a day for every day they work during the year; ineffective 29⅔ cents, while on *Great Diamond* they earned respectively 23⅔ cents and 13⅙ cents. Effective females on *Albion* 26⅓, and on *Great Diamond* 15⅞

* Report, &c., ¶ 364.

cents.—The differences are partly owing to the fact that Mr. Kelly has only entered 71 per cent. of his males and 90 per cent. of his females as effectives, whereas Mr. Field has 98 per cent. of his males and 92 per cent. of his females as effectives. Mr. Kelly's appear to have earned 20 per cent. more than Mr. Field's."

Taking the wages of about 8,000 persons, the Commissioners found that *forty per cent.* have earned the minimum 5*s.* and upwards per week; many of these 8,000 perhaps only working two, three, or four days in the week. "These returns and some figures taken from an analysis of pay-lists of Plantations *Farm* and *Cumings Lodge*, which we shall give hereafter, show that even if the males are taken alone at least *forty per cent. of those who work in a given week do not earn five shillings and upwards.*

"It has been stated, and we have ascertained the fact for ourselves, that able-bodied men (or efficient male immigrants as they are called in the returns furnished by the Planters' Committee) generally average from four to five days' work in a week. Mr. Field, in a foot-note to one of these returns, has given a very valuable statement showing the number of persons of each class absent from work daily, from sickness, leave, or other causes. Every day, out of a gang of 327 effectives, 63 have been absent, taking the working days in the year at 313. Thus a little more than one-fifth were absent daily. Mr. Field's effective labourers must, therefore, have turned out to work nearly five days in the week; but as it is generally

the case that they work not much on Mondays and not at all on Saturdays, the number of full days' work may be said to be about four.

"Two sets of pay-lists have been examined by us from the estates *Cumings Lodge* and *Farm*, the figures drawn from which will further serve to show what the earnings of indentured immigrants really are. Mr. Clementson the proprietor of *Cumings Lodge*, is generally spoken of as a man who manages his immigrants with great skill, and who never has occasion to bring any of his labourers before the magistrate for breaches of the Immigration Laws. When we visited the estate, the people appeared quite content, and did not come forward with any complaints, though they had ample opportunity of doing so. His pay-list contained the building, shovel, and weeding gangs all in one, and thus presented facilities for ascertaining the whole amounts earned by each person, which were not so readily open to us on many estates. The wages earned by each individual for twelve months have been taken from this pay-list, and give a very good idea of the earnings of immigrants on well-managed estates. Those who died, deserted, or left the estate during the year, and one or two women, who appeared scarcely to have worked at all, have been omitted, in order that the return may convey a fair idea of the earnings of immigrants who have worked during the year on one estate. Two hundred and thirty-one persons on *Cumings Lodge* earned $13,239.62, equal to an average of $57.31 each. One hundred and eighty-five of these

were men, forty-five women, and a boy. The highest amount earned by any of them was $119.76, equal to an average of $2.30 a week. From his being a first-rate man on an estate noted for the superior character of its people, we may fairly assume that he averaged five days' work in a week. His average daily earnings would, therefore, have been 46 cents; of the remainder, 94 men and 2 women earned more than 5*s.* a week. Thus 90 men and 43 women out of the numbers taken did not earn 5*s.* a week. On reference to the visits to estates it will be found that on *Cumings Lodge* some of the men and women earn very little, and this will be found to be the case on every estate, but it does not follow from this that they are suffering from want of food or other necessaries. Some are regular malingerers, who will not work, and are being well fed in gaol; others are women whose husbands are earning high wages, who do not care to work themselves; while others are patients in hospital, where they are fed gratis. The extract from the Farm pay-lists are not quite so complete as those we have just dealt with, because the names of the immigrants were entered in two books—the building and the field pay-list. In the field pay-list their names were entered in alphabetical order, but in the other according to the work they were doing; and they were not always spelt in the same way. There were 274 persons in the gang, but 98 have been omitted; 78 of these were either persons who had died or who had been in hospital, deserted or absented themselves from

work from other reasons, such as nursing, pregnancy, &c., for a great part of the time over which our examination extended; the remaining 20 were persons who had worked in the buildings, or at other occupations, but the amount of whose earnings we were not able to ascertain quite correctly; of the 176 who remain the earnings were as follows: 2 men, who were foremen or drivers, earned $76.80 and $72.80 respectively, during 25 consecutive weeks, equal to an average of $3.07 and $2.91 weekly. The highest amounts earned by any of the labourers, leaving out the drivers, were $64.24 and $48.52, or $2.57 and $1.94 a week; of those left, numbering 172, only 43 averaged as much as 5*s.* a week. When it is remembered that the 176 persons taken were selected from a gang of 274 persons, all who had been much absent in hospital, or elsewhere, being omitted, this return must be taken as a favourable statement of the average earnings of healthy immigrants on this estate.

"Mr. Kelly has favoured us with some returns showing the wages earned by sixteen of the labourers on his estate. From the number of days they have worked, and the amounts they have earned, we infer that they were first-class men. Taking all of them together, they have averaged more than five days work in a week throughout the year. The best man worked for 283 days, and averaged 49 cents a day; and he who earned least worked for 278 days, and averaged 30 cents a day. From the returns of Messrs. Field and Kelly, together with the tables referred to

and other *data* already given, it is evident that very few immigrant labourers average 48 cents a day for five days in a week. It will also be seen that of those classed as effectives, those who earn above 36 cents a day are few compared with those who earn from 24 to 36 cents.

"We believe, from what we have seen, and taking these *data* as far as they go to assist us to form an opinion, that the average earnings of this class of immigrants, drivers, artisans, and other headmen excepted, throughout the colony, are about 28 cents a day for every day that they do a fair day's work. 28 cents is 1*s.* 2*d.*, and is equal to not quite 10 annas. When employed by the task in the field, they average 6 hours at work, and earn about 5 cents an hour. About four-fifths of the male adult immigrants may be included in this class. Women earn from 16 to 32 cents, but do not, as a rule, work as many days as the men. Children between the ages of 10 and 15 earn from 8 to 16 cents a day.

"It may be as well to mention here the case of a Coolie on *Château Margot* Estate who had earned a great deal of money; and, as far as we could learn, only by agricultural labour. Ujoodha, No. 123, *ex* ship *Oasis*, who arrived here in 1865, earned during the year 1870 $203.34; he intends to return to India next year, having saved several hundred dollars during the five years he has been here.' He said that he was never sick, and that he seldom missed a day's work in the year, Sundays excepted. He was a well-made muscular fellow, much above the average of his

fellow-countrymen here, and said that he had been an agricultural labourer in India. Mr. Gray, the manager, gives the following account of him: 'He is a man of very good character, and most industrious. He is seldom absent from work. I have never had occasion to bring him up before the magistrate.' This is, however, a very exceptional case, and is the only instance we have met with where a labourer had earned so much simply by estate work. Moholly, an immigrant on the *Adelphi* Estate, who had been here before, had gone back to India, and returned again to this colony, was another example of what first-rate men can earn. During the year ending 30th June, 1870, he had earned $155.70 by work in the field and buildings, and owned several cattle."

I have deemed it best, on this grave question, to adhere to the words of the Report, so that, on my part there may be no undue light or shade thrown upon any of the facts stated in regard to it. There can now be no doubt whatever on the reader's mind that, to represent to a recruit in India, the current rate of wages in British Guiana earned by a man, to be easily from 1*s.* 3*d.* to 4*s.* *per diem*, when the average for male Coolie effectives is 1*s.* 2*d.* for a fair day's work, is to awaken in his mind expectations never to be fulfilled, and to initiate a wrong whose bitter consequences may not fall alone upon the sufferer.

CHAPTER XXII.

AIDS AND REMEDIES ON THE COOLIES' BEHALF.

OF the remedies enforceable against employers by the Executive or the Immigration Agent-General for infractions of contract under the Immigration Ordinances, we have already seen that the Governor, Mr. Hincks, saw fit to take them altogether out of the hands of that official. Hence the Governor, while practically degrading the Protector of Immigrants, and assuming to himself administrative functions, diminished also to a great extent his own dignity and authority. He was no longer the *deus ex machinâ*, only to be produced on great occasions, but he was the immediate dealer with recalcitrant planters. On the other hand, he was in a position, were he so disposed (it is of no consequence whether he did so or not), to play off his powers according as this or that personal end was to be served. Instead of an administration of the law, conducted by the proper officials, and subjected to the rigid scrutiny of the judges, the administration of immigration was a loose and irresponsible and irregular circle of threats, correspondences, and compro-

mises. Of this the Colonial Office had notice from Mr. Crosby in the course of the correspondence arising out of the Governor's complaint against him. They censured Mr. Crosby for the *manner* of his opposition, but not apparently for the *matter*. Yet they did not insist on a change. Nothing could more clearly show to the English public how necessary it is that constant vigilance and active criticism should be brought to bear on our Colonial Administration. It surely ought to have occurred to any Colonial Secretary that in permitting this dangerous usurpation of power by a petty Governor, he was sowing seeds of discord in the colonial community and of injustice to the Coolies, whose protection the Government admit to be part of their duty. There was, then, a practical repeal of such enactments as enabled the Immigration Agent-General to initiate any proceedings under the very large powers of sections 97 and 99 of the Ordinance 4 of 1864.

By the intermediate section (98), if it were established before a magistrate on any complaint preferred by an immigrant, *or by the Immigration Agent-General*, that the immigrant was not provided by his employer with sufficient work to enable him to earn a just amount of wages in terms of his contract, on a report by the magistrate to the Governor, the latter might cancel his indenture, and transfer him to another estate. The difficulty, however, of establishing such a case, even were it not a rare one in so busy a colony, renders this section of secondary importance. Another section, which overlaps section 90.

gives great power to the Governor. "If it shall at any time appear to the Governor, *on just cause shown to his satisfaction* (?), that all or any of the immigrants indentured on any plantation should be removed therefrom, it shall be lawful for the Governor to order" them to be released and discharged from that employer. This power, which the Governor holds *in terrorem*, is exercised in special instances, particularly when men who have threatened women require to be removed; but it is evidently one of so delicate a character and inflicting so great a punishment that it ought only to be resorted to in extreme cases. The planters themselves should be foremost in objecting to the play of this private and irresponsible power wherever the open judgment of a court of law can be made available for the purpose in view. In the celebrated Enterprise case, where several Coolies were alleged to have been improperly confined, Acting-Governor Mundy attempted to compel the proprietors or attorneys to dismiss the manager. This they refused to do. It was an admirable opportunity to avail himself of his powers under this section, and to show the firmness of the Executive, by withdrawing all the immigrants from the plantation; but he did not do it. He may have received notice, as was suggested on good authority, that they would not be received elsewhere. The power is so great that most men would naturally shrink from applying it, and a mitigated power might practically be more powerful—to use a paradox.

The "suitable and sufficient dwelling-house ac-

commodation" was one of the matters by the Ordinance 4 of 1864, sec. 152, committed to the supervision of the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, who "was to report upon the state and condition of the houses, and the state and condition of the yard and grounds about the same." Section 129 had enjoined upon the manager the obligation of taking care that the yard and grounds for the space of fifty feet (when practicable) round about the dwelling-houses were well drained, and the drains clean and in good order, &c., the extreme penalty being $24. Certain police-officers, called Commissaries of Taxation, also had the duty cast upon them of entering the plantation once in three months, inspecting the yards and grounds, and, after notice and failure to comply with it, of laying an information against the employer. These provisions were so elaborate that no one seems to have mastered them. The Medical Inspector of Hospitals "never considered it his duty to do more than report on the state of repair of the dwellings; the Immigration Agents considered their primary responsibility on all matters connected with the dwellings to be at an end;" while the Commissaries exercised a discretion not accorded to them by the ordinance, and avoided raising unpleasant issues. Hence that state of the surface drainage about the houses on which I have animadverted in describing my visits to estates. Hence also the state of unrepair of some of the more ancient tenements. "In April, 1870, the Executive promulgated a rule that no new immigrants should be allotted until Dr. Shier had reported that there was house room for them on the estate; but there is too

much reason to fear that the very strictness with which this wholesome rule has been carried out, has, in the absence of proper arrangements, tended rather to the disadvantage, both in quality and quantity, of the accommodation of the old immigrants. Of all the excellent dwellings which we saw in the process of building upon the estates, by far the greater part were intended for new immigrants; whereas frequently we should have preferred to learn that their destination was to replace the very ruinous lodgings occupied by the old immigrants."

In reviewing the persons by whom the rights of the Coolie are to be preserved, the magistrates necessarily occupy a prominent position. They are scattered over the colony, hence are more conveniently approached than the solitary Immigration Office, and indeed are now often applied to in matters not strictly judicial. In the enormous number of cases arising under the Immigration Ordinance, unless they exercise unusual keenness, industry, and watchfulness, they must inevitably do a considerable amount of injustice. Nothing, for instance, could be more demoralising to a magistrate's district than that he should be known to be an easy-going justice, accepting evidence without troublesome inquisitiveness, availing himself of the too extraordinary facilities for evidence-making afforded by the Immigration Laws. "Asking no questions for conscience sake" would be the motto of such a justiciary. He would be beloved of prosecutors—detested of defendants. Are there any such in British Guiana?

Mr. Des Vœux, himself formerly a magistrate, dis-

tinctly brought against his late brother magistrates the charge of undue subserviency to the planters, and it was a necessary subject of investigation. The Commissioners in their Report are inclined to attribute the principal evils of the administration of justice rather to the laws than to the justices; but they seem not to have drawn from the facts stated by themselves the deductions warranted by them. The amount of space afforded to the hospitals in the Report seems disproportionate to their importance in the system. The management of these places is a matter of grave moment; it respects the Coolie in his lowest estate; it undoubtedly may exhibit criminal abuses; but, in looking at the immigration system, those abuses constitute a subordinate part of it; their management can, by stricter supervision and reorganised machinery, be made nearly perfect. But how are we to change a society? How to secure a just administration of law? How to insure to the Coolie, well or ill, a safe resort in cases of wrong, oppression, and fraud? This seems to me of infinite consequence. It concerns not only his physical health, but his welfare, his morality, his happiness. Therefore I should wish to have seen in the Report some larger attention paid to the great question of the magistracy of the colony. The difficulty in criticising such a body of men is that the innocent and high-minded necessarily get mixed up with the guilty. And there are men of high character among Demerara magistrates. In reading my observations on the magistracy, therefore, the reader should understand

that though general in language, it is not intended to be general in its incidence; and of the magistrates themselves no one will be offended who does not feel himself to be worthy of reproach.

When testing a charge of subserviency and partiality against the body of magistrates in British Guiana, we must advert to the fact that they are placed in a peculiar relation to a subordinate class of another race, with a special responsibility arising out of that relation. An English magistrate, surrounded by constant witnesses of his proceedings, criticised by newspapers, watched by lawyers, and open to an appeal, will be necessarily careful to preserve an even balance in his adjudications, and is not likely to commit errors of set purpose. But if a judge, sitting in a court sequestered from public observation, dealing with ignorant and puzzled natives of another race and language, in the presence only of spectators strongly interested against them, suffers himself, not once or twice or in one set of particulars, to be loose in administering the law, or to be one-sided in his leanings, there is no possible conclusion but one. In addition to those grave evidences of magisterial weakness which have been animadverted upon in former pages, it is my duty to refer to others.

Mr. Des Vœux alleged a "practice"—one of the many unhappy generalisations from very few particulars used by him in the course of his long indictment—of winking at illegal summary arrests, made by order of managers, who are often justices of the

peace, on charges for breaches of contract under the Immigration Laws, which clearly did not authorise the proceeding. Thus it was suggested a man was, as a punishment, locked up on some slight pretence, who it was known would be discharged by the magistrate at the next court. Mr. Des Vœux said that on becoming magistrate of his district he found persons in custody on such charges, and dismissed them; that cases again came before him where planters continued the "practice;" and that his decided action thereupon brought him into odium. The Commissioners were unable to follow Mr. Des Vœux to the extent of his inferences. Nor was he himself able to produce evidence that covered his statements. Yet the Commissioners report as follows:*—

"Two other cases are those of arrests for desertions. The charges in these cases were produced in court by Mr. Inspector-General Cox; upon them there was an endorsement in Mr. Des Vœux's handwriting, 'Discharged as being in illegal custody.' It appears that the only offence against the Immigration Labour Law, for which the arrest of an immigrant without warrant is authorised, is the being absent, without a pass, more than two miles from his estate. Such a person is commonly called a deserter; but the legal definition of a deserter does not exactly coincide with that of an indentured immigrant liable to arrest without warrant. The deserter is a labourer subject to indenture, who has been absent seven consecutive days from the muster-roll and from work. If,

* Report, &c., ¶ 19.

therefore, the charge were laid as 'desertion,' and there was no warrant for the arrest, the imprisonment would be informal, and the prisoner ought to be discharged. It seems, moreover, that there has been *considerable laxity* in the interpretation of the words, 'found at a distance greater than two miles from the estate.' When a deserter is found he is taken back to his estate in charge of the police; and it has often occurred that a manager, wishing to charge him with the offence, has at once given him in charge to the same policeman, and had him locked up, without waiting for a warrant. Thus, during this same year 1867, three immigrants, sent back to their estate from Georgetown, after a detention in custody of unusual length, which was due to the police missing the steamer, were taken to Tiger Island, and upon their arrival at Plantation Hamburg were immediately given into custody by the manager for desertion, and re-transferred to the lock-up at Suddie. They were dismissed soon after upon the remonstrances of Mr. Firth, Sub-Agent of Immigration, who happened to be on the spot; and on his report an investigation took place. It appears that they had, in fact, come to town to lay a complaint before the Immigration Office—an act which at the present time would not be a desertion, and certainly ought never to have been so held. A final minute was made on the papers by Lieut.-Governor Mundy to the following effect:—

"'The Inspector-General to be requested to give particular instructions to the police not to detain

persons in the lock-ups without a magistrate's warrant. These men ought at once to have been forwarded to Hamburg, and proceeded against by the manager by complaint and summons' R. M. M., July 5th).

"For another instance of the same irregularity we beg to refer to Mr. Des Vœux's letter and evidence, and also to Mr. Trotman's evidence, for an account of the same case, in no material respect differing from this, as it appeared to the other principal actor in the matter. Such arrests have undoubtedly in former days been common, and in some districts are so still. Mr. Huggins tells us that if it came out in evidence that a deserter had been illegally arrested in the manner above described, he should consider it his duty to discharge him; but that he has never pressed the point in the case of a desertion so far as to inquire where the party had been arrested. Mr. Ware in his evidence *seems rather doubtful whether the arrest under such circumstances is not, after all, legal; but concludes that it is not.*"

Whether these illegal arrests were or were not common throughout the colony at the time—as the Commissioners think they were not—the following order of the Inspector-General of Police, issued on January 16th, 1863, stands as an evidence that the Executive looked upon the matter with some anxiety:—

"Representations having been made to me that some of the officers of the police in charge of stations are in the habit of receiving, and confining as pri-

soners, persons charged with neglect of duty, refusing to work, being disorderly, and with committing ordinary assaults, petty breaches of the peace, and such-like offences, orders are now given that in future persons charged with the two first-mentioned offences are not to be received on any terms whatever," &c.

If that order states the truth, and it must have originated in some singular condition of the police administration to attract so decided an ukase, the magistrates, who would be the first to be brought face to face with the illegality, cannot exonerate themselves from blame, since they were bound immediately to discountenance it, not only by discharging the prisoners, but by distinctly warning the offenders that they were laying themselves open to actions for false imprisonment.

The Commissioners remark, by the way, "that in the present state of the law, to have an indentured immigrant (at all events) arrested on a trumped-up charge either of theft or trespass, would be a most unnecessary piece of chicanery. *There is quite sufficient facility afforded—too much indeed—for getting a conviction against any man whom a manager is at all likely to wish to punish, by means of a direct charge under the Labour Law.*" But, as I understand it, the gist of Mr. Des Vœux's suggestion is that, in these cases, the manager did not want a *conviction*, but a temporary punishment or fright, ending in a discharge.

Let us take another instance. It may be convenient, but it is illegal and unjust, to try a number of persons in a batch for offences that could not be, or were not,

jointly committed. It would lift off the wig of an English judge with astonishment were he to hear of such a proceeding. How do the Commissioners report upon this? "For the practice in Mr. Ware's court, Mr. Yewens, who was clerk there before and during Mr. Des Vœux's time, bears testimony that it in no way differed from Mr. Des Vœux's, but in some other districts his experience was different; and circumstances have accidentally come before us which show us that *a good deal of laxity* has prevailed. For instance, one such charge was actually submitted to us by Mr. Ware, which had been taken in his district, although not by him. Another was heard by Mr. Dampier, magistrate in the West Coast district of Demerara, on the 22nd of June, 1870—a charge informal in more than one respect, although a conviction was obtained. Besides the joint charge for an offence not joint, it specifies a task allotted to two, a thing not recognised by law, and allotted moreover on two days, whereas the legal task is only one day's work, and it is signed by an overseer 'on behalf of' the deputy-manager, instead of, as it should have been, by the deputy-manager, or whoever was the complainant, himself. Although this case became the subject of correspondence, and the papers came under the cognizance of the authorities, these irregularities do not appear to have been noticed. We have also found another instance, a case heard by Mr. Bury, which also became the subject of investigation and comment, though not on this ground, and we have no reason to doubt that there are others, the motive

apparently being, as Mr. Des Vœux says, that they may be disposed of more quickly.'"*

On this the Commissioners make no comment, and it needs none: but they might have drawn a conclusion.

Another instance arose out of a practice of the employers to force open the doors of immigrants' houses and turn them out to work. It is a very nice question whether the manager has not as much right to enter a Coolie house as a master has to enter his servant's room; but it was considered illegal by some of the magistrates.

"Upon this head Mr. Ware himself confirms the fact that such a practice was common; since he found it in existence after he resumed charge of the district. He then set his face against it, and in two instances imposed a penalty. We noticed that Mr. Des Vœux himself never found an immigrant willing to bring a complaint on this score; and his accusation of the other magistrates is, under the circumstances, a little out of place. It is as follows:—

"'I frequently suggested to the immigrants, on their complaints respecting such acts, that they should bring criminal charges against the aggressors; but although their fears invariably prevented their adoption of this course, I believe that the mere hint had the effect of checking a practice which I was given to understand had never before met with reproof from the Bench.'

"Mr. Yewens says that he is well aware of the practice, and of its always having been considered illegal

* Report, &c., ¶ 23

by the magistrates. As to the practice of 'turning out,' in popular parlance, we observe that it is in fact the regular morning duty of the overseers, or drivers, who are bound to see the people out at work, a task which requires great tact and temper in the performance, and for which it is hard to lay down a line where the transgression of the law begins and justifiable energy ceases; a mere fault of manner will soon convert what is probably looked upon merely as a part of the disagreeable necessity of getting out of bed into forcible entry and intrusion, and a violation of the principle that every immigrant's hut is his castle. It is very likely that the sanctity of the latch is not sufficiently respected in Guiana; but if the people are aware of their rights, and in a position to enforce them, there is not much risk of abuse."

It seems to me open to very severe observation, that other of the magistrates throughout the colony, believing the practice in question to be illegal, should not have animadverted upon it with severity, and advised the Coolies of their rights. The poor people have no other adviser. We have seen that a magistrate can advise a planter. A "common practice" coming to the magistrates' knowledge and permitted to continue unchecked, even up to the time of the Commission, can scarcely be passed by with a simple regret, especially if it be taken along with a number of other not easily explainable circumstances.

In the case of that proviso of section 12 of Ordinance 9 of 1868, before alluded to, the conduct of the magistracy is yet more indefensible. It is not to be

expected that the unskilled immigrants will rake up a proviso, to use an expression of the Commissioners, "stuck into" the end of a long section. The proviso embodies one of the most valuable of Coolie rights—that of laying his complaint, if he has a reasonable one, before the Immigration Agent-General. Can we regard any magistrate refusing—as we found one doing—the right altogether, and a whole body of magistrates neither suggesting it to the Coolie nor recognising it, without suspicion? Even Mr. Hincks, whose error was not undue partiality for the immigrants, in one of his minutes (4th Feb., 1865) said: "With regard to the magistrates, I have to observe that I feel persuaded from my knowledge of what has been *directed* in other colonies, that the Secretary of State looks on the stipendiary magistrates as in a great degree the protectors of immigrants. There is no colony, I am persuaded, where the magistrates have so carefully abstained from putting themselves in the position of prosecutors as in this. But a magistrate is not to shut his eyes to *gross abuses!*"

The position is correct. If the Colonial Office cannot show us on the magisterial bench in the colony a body of independent men, one of its mainstays in defending the Coolie system is gone. The relation of the magistrate to the immigrants—certainly a peculiar one for an administrator of justice under English forms—throws on him a weighty responsibility, and necessitates his doing far more than merely to hear and discriminate upon a one-sided story. He is to ascertain whether under any pro-

vision of the Acts any point can be taken in favour of the man who, with every disadvantage, stands before him, his very weakness pleading for justice.

The Report of the Commissioners on the charge of undue severity of sentences I transcribe verbatim:*—

"The last and gravest charge against the stipendiary magistrates is that of undue rigour in inflicting punishment on immigrants, defendants in labour cases. Mr. Des Vœux has supplied us with figures, by which it appears that the average of his fines was lower than that of other magistrates; and from further experience of the wages earned in the colony, he considers that his own mark was too high rather than too low. Mr. Huggins, while magistrate in the West Coast district, was found fault with on account of the lowness of his fines. Mr. Des Vœux's average for a month, taken at random, he gives at $2.50 for offences against the Labour Law; for a month of Mr. Ware's he gives an average at $3.25; and for one each of Mr. Dampier's and Mr. Cox's $5 each. Mr. Dampier's average for a recent month, however, is given at $4. These figures we have not verified, but think them not improbable. It is to be observed that Mr. Des Vœux more seldom gave the option of a fine than other magistrates, especially in cases of desertion, so that the average of his fines as compared with theirs is not the exact measure of his lenity. We regret to say that we are bound to consider this complaint as being to a great extent well founded. The subject is so important that we prefer to discuss

* Report, &c., ¶ 30.

it hereafter, apart from personal considerations. In the meantime, we acknowledge that Mr. Des Vœux has done good service in drawing public attention to the circumstances. As a matter of opinion, we agree with him that the magistrates' sentences are too severe. We do not, however, on this ground, subscribe to his charges of partiality and subservience against his late colleagues."

The average of sentences of imprisonments without a fine in the county of Demerara was 28·8 days. For over 3,000 convictions the average for men is 39 days, for women 25·7 days. The average of imprisonments in default of payment of a fine is—men, 23·4, women, 20. Of imprisonment in default of payment of fine there were 5,218 against 3,078 without that option. The fines imposed as an alternative, which the immigrants could not pay, *averaged for males* $6.47, *and females* $7.71. The whole number of convictions in the county during five years was 10,555. The Commissioners conclude that *the number who go to gaol is over eighty per cent., and the number who pay fines under twenty per cent., of the total number convicted.* This would seem to some extent to modify the statements advanced by Mr. Oliver of the generally wealthy condition of the immigrants. The average over the whole colony appears to be $5 fine and twenty days' imprisonment.

The reader who has read the evidence about wages, and who considers that only about forty per cent. of those working in a given week earned *five shillings* (*i.e.*, 8*d.* over one dollar), and upward, may judge of

the severity of fines, the *average* of which is from $6.50 to $5! They may also form their own opinion of the terms of mild deprecation the Commissioners use. I hesitate to say a qualifying word to the admiration and satisfaction which the Report merits; yet I cannot but express my opinion that if half the severity expended on the luckless Dr. Shier had been assigned to this branch of the question, the value of the Report would have been materially enhanced. For the working key of the Coolie system is the magistrate's court. It must be admitted, however, in some mitigation of too harsh a judgment, that many of the apparent imbecilities of magisterial administration in Demerara are due to the imbecility of the enactments; hence these require the earliest attacks of reformers.

Not alone do the Coolies mistrust some of the magistrates. The Portuguese and Creoles are equally unconfiding. The former have forwarded to the Colonial Office a memorial complaining in very strong terms of the Magistrates' Courts. The Blacks do not appear to be better satisfied. One story told me, which was, I understood, a current joke in the colony, concerned a worthy stipendiary, who, like brother stipendiaries elsewhere, sometimes fell into debt. A Portuguese creditor, after many vain applications, took out a summons against him in the Petty Debt Court, and the case came on to be tried before the delinquent himself. When it was called on—let us name it "Carvalho *v.* Smith"—Smith the magistrate, *quà* magistrate, called for the defendant, and *quà* Smith responded, "Here!"

SMITH (magistrate, *loquitur*).—Well, Mr. Carvalho, what have you to say against the defendant?

CARVALHO.—Why, sir, you know perfectly well you owe me the money, and have a long time since. I sold you, &c. &c., and I lent you, &c. &c., and I served the account on you, and you admitted it.

SMITH (magistrate).—Well, defendant, what have you to say for yourself?

Putting his hand to his mouth—

SMITH (as defendant).—Well, sir, I admit the debt, but I can't pay it just now. I am willing to pay it if I get time.

SMITH (magistrate to plaintiff).—You hear what the defendant says; what objection have you to give him time?

CARVALHO.—No, sir! I will not give you any time. I have already been kept out of my money these many months. I will——

SMITH (magistrate).—Oh! you *must* give him time. Judgment for plaintiff: defendant to have six months to pay the money. Call the next case!

In the country districts 28·4 per cent. of all the cases heard by the magistrate are under the immigration ordinances.*

Out of 31,900 cases returned for five years, 16,222 resulted in convictions. A large proportion of the rest were withdrawn or compromised, and a small proportion were acquittals. Nothing can be more significant of the course of justice than this! It is incredible that this is a proper average of acquittals. In one district there were:

* Report, &c., ¶ 398.

Charges		818
Convictions . .	219	
Acquittals . . .	4	
Withdrawn, &c. .	523	
Balance	72	818

In another district (Berbice River) in five years, out of 1,603 cases there were *only* 33 *acquittals; and in the last three years, of* 783 *cases not one has ended in an acquittal!* This is simply monstrous. The Commissioners suggest in mitigation of too harsh a judgment, that after withdrawal of half the charges, it is not likely that those persisted in will turn out unfounded; but as they have previously, and quite correctly, stated that charges are constantly brought by managers as a means of coercion or punishment, with no intention of carrying them further, we must come back almost to a normal calendar in the numbers actually tried. The attempted palliation therefore has little weight. It seems to be too true that "to be prosecuted is with an immigrant almost the same thing as to be convicted and sentenced." Happily the general percentage of charges resulting in conviction has been decreasing year by year.* Further, the Commissioners have entered into a calculation, based on the numbers of actually working immigrants, to show that, exclusive of a large proportion of sick, infirm, &c., half the immigrant population are continually liable to punishment under the single clause requiring them to perform five tasks.†

The holding, in a proper and trustworthy manner, of inquests on immigrants dying under any extraordi-

* Report, &c., ¶ 409. † Ib., ¶¶ 414, 415.

nary circumstances, is obviously a matter of necessity. If conducted by persons in whom the Coolies have confidence, it allays the too quick suspicions of foul play which a nervous and ignorant people are always ready to entertain. On the other hand, it is rendered imperative by the seclusion of estates, the opportunities for murder, assault, or poisoning, the general maintenance of executive discipline over both employers and Coolies. The situation of the plantations in Demerara gives rise to natural difficulties in obtaining trustworthy inquisitions. One-third of the justices of the peace are resident managers. They have the power of holding inquests. The jury consists generally of three persons. In many cases the jury is chosen from the *employés* of the estate on which the decease occurred. The coroner is the neighbouring manager. Mr. Des Vœux discovered one case in which Mr. Menzies, the manager of Zeelugt, had held an inquest on a Chinese indentured on his own estate.*

"It may be said, therefore, without imputing personal misconduct to the administrators of the system, that in those doubtful cases of death under circumstances of suspicion which will sometimes occur, as, for instance, where an immigrant puts an end to his life in a fit of misery or despondency, or where accidents happen in the buildings among the machinery, or where loss of life is due to the bad state of repair in which are many of the structures upon estates, the colony has not sufficient security that the facts should be thoroughly and

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 287—292.

impartially investigated. Two or three instances which were brought under our notice in consequence of complaints by immigrants, impressed us strongly with this fact. We do not wish to be understood to say that in any of these cases we had reason to doubt the accidental nature of the circumstances which caused death; but it was plain that in the minds of the immigrants the investigation bore no satisfying character, a thing the less to be wondered at by ourselves after spending the time and pains necessary before we could assure ourselves that there was no ground for suspicion in the circumstances of the hasty and inadequate inquiry.

"Mr. Sheriff Fraser tells us that it is his habit to reserve all important inquests to himself—that is to say, he lets the justices of the peace know that he will always be ready to undertake them, and that all they will be called upon to do is in cases of emergency to swear in a jury, and take the medical evidence. That this rule, which there is no direct authority to enforce, is still not quite sufficient, we have a painful proof in the circumstances of an inquest held at Goldstone Hall on the 6th day of December, 1869. The Coolies on this estate made a complaint that seven men had been pushed out of a two-story window in the overseer's house where they had gone to receive their pay. One was killed by the fall, one was since dead, and another a cripple. The looseness with which the evidence was taken, and some other unsatisfactory circumstances in the version of the story given to the Commissioners on the part of the estate's authorities, will be apparent from the

notes of visits (Goldstone Hall), and from the report of the inquest printed in our Appendix.

"Another case on Plantation Aurora, into which we found it necessary to inquire, did not appear to have been the subject of an inquest at all. In the absence of the manager, Mr. Trotter, part proprietor of the estate, undertook to investigate the matter for us, and afterwards informed us in evidence that he had discovered an inquest was held, which, on applying for the papers, *we found to have taken place after our visit had called attention to the subject, and three weeks after the occurrence.* But the gravest of all the cases in this connection is that of the murder of Low-a-si on Plantation Annandale, on Friday, the 28th May, 1868, and repeatedly referred to in evidence before us.* In this case, a series of assaults of great barbarity were committed upon the person of a Chinese working as 'boxman'—that is to say, wheeling away the trucks containing megass in the buildings on an evening when, apparently owing to bad health and fatigue, he was unable or unwilling to work. Although it is not to be supposed that there was any definite intention on the part of the two overseers and drivers who were implicated, especially the head overseer and driver, in these acts of violence; yet it would appear from the evidence taken before the coroner that a clear *primâ facie* case of murder existed against Matheson and Baker, the head overseer and driver in question. The inquest was held by a neighbouring manager, in favour of whose impartiality it is recorded

* The recital of this case occupies a large portion of Mr. Beaumont's pamphlet, "The New Slavery," before mentioned.

by Mr. Cox that on one occasion he sent on to the Supreme Court the son of the lessee of another estate for murder. The jury returned a verdict against the driver of 'manslaughter,' and the coroner reported to the police that there was no evidence against the overseer, meaning apparently that there was no evidence against him to which the jury could have given credit. In the meantime, both Matheson and Baker had absconded on the very night of the murder, and warrants were out for their apprehension. On receipt of the private information from the coroner that there was no evidence against Matheson, Mr. Cox seems to have come to the conclusion that it was his duty, of his own authority, and without further inquiry, to suspend the warrant for his apprehension, at the same time that, with some inconsistency, he directed a prosecution of the driver, not for 'manslaughter,' in accordance with the verdict, but for 'murder.' The proceedings in the inquest, apparently, must have been forwarded to the Attorney-General; but of this we are compelled to remain uncertain, as also of the fact—which we should have considered hardly admitted of a doubt—how far the Attorney-General's responsibility in such matters covers that of the Inspector-General of Police. Mr. Gilbert, the present holder of the office, in his evidence seemed to consider this is a question of law so doubtful that he would not be justified in stating his opinion on oath, or in any other than in the professional form.

"Baker the driver was caught in Trinidad, brought back, and tried for the murder. Matheson is reported to have remained in hiding until intimation was con-

veyed to him that he was not 'wanted,' under circumstances implying that considerable interest was being made to protect him from the law. Finally, the driver was acquitted. Whether the jury thought he was being made a scapegoat for a crime for which his superior was more responsible than himself we cannot say; but we can hardly suppose that if both the perpetrators had been put at once upon their trial, it would have been possible for them both to escape without punishment.

"The conclusion we draw from these and other cases is, that the English notion of a coroner's jury is utterly unfitted for the country districts of British Guiana. We recommend that the duty of holding inquests be transferred to the stipendiary magistrates, or coroners specially appointed, that the jury be dispensed with, and that the magistrates be required to report directly to the Attorney-General on all cases of death by violence, or under suspicious circumstances, stating whether, in their opinion, there is ground for a prosecution; but if not, reporting to the Attorney-General all the same. The duty of deciding in such cases whether or not a warrant is to be enforced should also be clearly made and recognised as part of the Attorney-General's functions." There are other very painful conclusions to be drawn from this transaction.

The number of floating stories, among the Chinese especially, of murders or suicides occurring on various estates, which, it was alleged, were never disclosed or made the subject of inquests—the ghastly fables of hanging men, cut down and forthwith buried where

they fell, all that were investigated turning out to be untrue—proves that the extreme suspiciousness of the immigrants requires extraordinary care and attention to repress it. I go no further than that. The Commissioners, I am very happy to see, and as I anticipated, find that instances of personal cruelty on the part of managers are very rare. They are not so clear about the black and Coolie drivers; but the less cause there is for suspicion the more policy is there in placing these dangerous questions beyond the possibility of a doubt.

To sum up, therefore, the natural conclusions from this chapter. To the Immigration Office should be restored its lost powers of an original and originating department; as a necessity arising out of that, the Agent-General is required to be a man of considerable ability, tact, and force of character. The Medical Inspector of Hospitals should have placed at his disposal funds for prosecutions, and should not threaten, but prosecute. The flagging zeal of Commissaries of Taxation should be spurred by a strong hint from his Excellency, the Governor. To enable the Coolie, and all acting for him, to resort with confidence to the seats of justice, the greatest care in the selection of able and independent magistrates should be exercised by the Colonial Office. Gentlemen-justices of the peace should be abolished in the colony, and the inquests held, as the Commissioners suggest, by the stipendiary magistrates, without a jury.

I should hope none of the great planters, either in the colony or at home, would offer any objection to this reasonable programme.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MEDICAL INSPECTOR, DOCTORS, AND HOSPITALS.

A VERY large portion of the Report of the Commission is devoted to the subject of health, hospitals, and the medical staff. The valuable section on "Mortality and Acclimatisation" will be found in the Appendix.* I do not propose to enter at any great length into this subject, as it appears to me to be a subordinate one in relation to the general purpose of this review.

Enough has already been said of the dwellings, the drainage about them, and the absence of legal enforcement of penalties by the medical or other authorities. The planters are showing so much energy in improving their dwelling accommodation, that one may hope before long no pressure, legal or otherwise, will be needed in that respect.

The water supply—a matter of no small interest in a colony where nearly all the good drinking-water is collected from the skies during the rainy season—is, as yet, rather imperfectly provided for. Generally the immigrants are obliged to drink the bush-water,

* Appendix F.

which is charged with a great quantity of organic matter; and though one of the managers assured me that every day when he went "back" he took a large bowlful as an alterative—a process which, if persisted in, ought, I should say, to convert him into a fine specimen of moco-moco weed—there is no doubt that this water, seldom obtainable from the trenches with the limited purity even of its native woods, is an unhealthy beverage. Many proprietors are now importing from England large tanks of iron, and no doubt will find, in the improved health of their immigrants, the double recompense of greater usefulness and happiness.

The hospital system of British Guiana is rather elaborate, and gives rise to one of the largest items of expense in estate management. Every estate, before immigrants are allotted to it, is required by law to have a hospital suitable and sufficient for the immigrants on the estate; and if at any time it is made to appear to the Governor and Court of Policy that any such hospital is insufficient, or the arrangement is in any respect defective or injurious to the health of the patients, the Governor and Court of Policy, by order under the hand of the Government Secretary, may call upon the proprietor or lessee to provide additional accommodation or remedy the defect.* Why the Legislature should be mixed up in a matter purely Executive will be a natural question to any one considering the above enactment. The existence of an Immigration Office and of a

* Sec. 127 Ordinance 4 of 1864.

Medical Inspector of Hospitals is disregarded, though we should naturally look to one or other of these powers to take charge of this matter.

Further, the proprietor or lessee of every estate on which immigrants are situated is bound to employ a duly licensed medical practitioner, reporting his name to the Government Secretary.*

The medical practitioner is to visit the estate "*at least once in every forty-eight hours*, Sundays excepted, unless in cases of emergency," when the manager is bound to bring before him every immigrant needing medical assistance. The doctor is then required to make certain entries in register and case books, to be produced by the manager. He is, unless the nurse shall hold a proper certificate of competency for the purpose, himself to make up all the medicines which, during his visit, he may order for the patients. He is bound to inform every patient in the hospital of the scale of diet ordered for him; and the articles are to be supplied by the manager, properly cooked and fit for use, unless, for reasons of caste, the patient desires it uncooked. Further, on the doctor is laid the duty of "taking care that the hospital, with all bedding, utensils, and appliances belonging thereto, be at all times kept clean and in proper order, and that there be at all times an adequate supply of the medicines required by law, of good quality;" in default of which he is required to make a note in the register, for the information of the manager. The doctor is subjected to a penalty, *not to exceed*

* Sec. 133 Ordinance 4 of 1864.

$24, for default in complying with any of these injunctions.

The proprietor or lessee is also to employ one nurse, or more, when specially required to do so by the medical practitioner, or by the Medical Inspector, in cases of unusual sickness, and a female nurse if there be any female patients; these persons being removable on a certificate of unfitness by the Medical Inspector.*

Another section† enacted that the Colonial Surgeon-General, the Medical Inspector, and one other medical practitioner, selected by the Governor and Court of Policy, *having already framed* and submitted for the approval of the Governor and Court of Policy a list of medicines, and the quantities of each to be kept in each estate hospital, and likewise a list of the bedding, utensils, and other appliances, to be supplied for the use of the same, and copies of such lists as approved having been transmitted by the Government Secretary to the proprietor or lessee of each plantation, or his representative, such proprietor, lessee, or representative shall be bound from time to time, when necessary, to replace any such appliances which may be lost or worn out. The statement that the Committee had already framed such a list turned out, on examination, to be a legislative fib; and afterwards the Committee, instead of framing it as enjoined, reported that "*the provisions of the ordinance, as it stands, are sufficient for the attainment of the objects in view, and that it is unnecessary to com-*

* Sec. 134 Ordinance 4 of 1864. † Ib., sec. 135.

plicate matters by further regulations!!!" I should hope that such a Report by official Commissioners appointed by statute to do a certain thing is unique within British dominions. The Legislature had decided that further provisions and regulations *were necessary;* but these gentlemen—one the Medical Inspector of Hospitals—naïvely disagree with the Legislature. Disagreement often exists between a Legislature and those whom its laws affect; but the former generally gets its way, or hands the protester over to justice. In British Guiana the Legislature, or the Executive, were not so unreasonable. The three committeemen had the pleasure of repealing an Act by a letter. Similar provisions* with regard to diet lists, and rules and regulations for hospitals, were also deprecatingly waived by the same Commissioners.

Resort was however had to a circular issued under a former ordinance.† Under this circular suitable and sufficient hospital accommodation was defined to be:—That a kitchen should be attached to the hospital; that there should be a bath-room, a tub, and a sufficient supply of water; a water-closet on the same floor as the hospital, together with two movable night-chairs; that the hospital should be a building with at least two apartments for the accommodation separately of males and females; that each estate possessing not more than fifty immigrants should have hospital accommodation for ten beds; from fifty

* Secs. 137, 144 of Ordinance 4 of 1864.
† Ordinance 17 of 1859.

to one hundred, fifteen beds; and five per cent. for every additional hundred; that between each bed there should be a clear space of three feet, and when the beds were placed in rows there should be a clear space of six feet between the rows, and nothing less than 1,000 cubic feet of air to each patient; that each bedstead should be supplied with bed and pillow sack, with suitable dry material for stuffing, together with two sheets and a blanket; that for every bed there should be a washstand, basin, chamber utensil, tin cup and plate; that attached to each bed should be a black board, on which should be written the patient's name, date of admission, medicines and diet last ordered, and at the head of each bed should be a small shelf.

This, then, was the ample machinery provided by the law for securing comfort and attention to the sick Coolie. The machinery was ample, but the performance came very far short of the promise. In hardly one particular can it be said that there were not many and flagrant evasions or breaches by all concerned, from the Executive to the sick-nurse, of the conditions thus laid down.

In discussing this question, which is one well calculated to heat sensation to a boiling pitch, let us, to be just, consider the difficulties which lie in the way of the planter in coming up to such exacting regulations. Any one glancing over them must see at once that the expense of the provision here required will be very heavy. It falls upon the planter at the time when, perhaps, he needs all his

capital for the development of his estate. It is a continuous and heavy deduction from his profits or addition to his losses. He is simultaneously deprived of his workman's labour and charged with the expense of keeping and healing him. Moreover, when he most wants immigrants, and has to find a large sum of money to obtain them, he finds himself forced to expend money to enlarge his hospital and stock it with the necessary furniture. The burthen is specially great when the estate gets into difficulties, when it is hovering between bankruptcy and success, when certain ruin must ensue if immigrants are withdrawn or fresh ones denied, and yet the *res angustæ* prevent the fulfilment of the necessary conditions precedent.

Now all this exhibits the difficulties, but it affords no answer to the reformer. The easy retort to planters in every stage of progress or decay is—No proper medical provisions, no immigrants. The immigration system is one that can only be successfully carried out by wealthy capitalists. It is worse than bad policy—it is cruel—to encourage speculative enterprise in any business in which the welfare of immigrants is in jeopardy. Hence, I expect it will be found that the sugar estates of Guiana will be absorbed by rich proprietors in proportion to the rigour with which the Executive enforces the conditions of the immigration contract; a process not to my mind undesirable.

The main questions that arose before the Commission upon the medical management of estates are

divisible into the questions of *personnel* and of plant and material.

The supervision of the system is confided to the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, an office at present held by Dr. Shier, a man of high scientific attainments and unusual abilities. It is his duty to visit every hospital in the colony once in six months, and at each such visit carefully ascertain whether all the provisions of the ordinance within the scope of his jurisdiction have been duly complied with, and in every case of omission or violation of them to direct the manager or the medical practitioner, as the case may be, to remedy it. Furthermore, he is, if necessary, to make a representation to the Governor and Court of Policy. He might also set in motion the law in particular cases of abuse, a power which, in the chapter on Remedies on the Coolie's behalf, was shown to have been held in abeyance. In fact, Dr. Shier took ten years to consider whether he ought to put in force against managers the terrible sanctions of $24 penalties. The Commissioners have commented with some severity upon Dr. Shier's administration.

I select from the Report the few paragraphs which describe, more significantly than any other I could select, an incident which illustrates the character of Dr. Shier's supervision, the amazing long-suffering of the Executive, and the cool, leisurely indifference with which gentlemen connected with a magnificent estate treated every one else but themselves. Anna Regina is owned by Mr. Thomas Edward Moss; the attorney of the estate, Mr. Josias

Booker, was a member of the Court of Policy; Mr. Griffin S. Bascom, the manager, was also a member of the Court of Policy, and one of the financial representatives.*

"Dr. Shier defends the course he pursues because, if when he was appointed he had commenced a prosecution for every departure from the ordinance, it would have been a 'dead letter' at this day. He thinks there would have been no possibility of the hospitals attaining the state they have now arrived at; and that it would have raised a spirit of antagonism instead of willingness to do what the law requires, and that he would have been foiled at every corner. We cannot, in examining the records of the inspections, find much difference in the requisitions made on the 14th and intermediate inspections, and those made on the 21st; they appear much of the same nature, and to be attended to, or disregarded, much in the same manner.

"Dr. Shier considers the violation of rules he discovered mostly trivial, and declares that if they were of serious moment it would be matter of very great uneasiness. We notice, however, neglect to build hospitals when required, occasionally under circumstances justifying the imputation of a breach of faith; or to issue as rations the proper diet, and sick people kept in the cold for want of blankets,—which are not trivial violations of the rules. Dr. Shier's remarks, in such a case as Anna Regina, show that he does not look upon them as such, while Columbia, Haar-

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 800–805.

lem, and Houston, to all of which we shall refer in detail hereafter, appear almost equally bad.

"We cannot find that Dr. Shier ever enforced an observance of his instructions by means of the law, or that he ever, by mentioning a time within which an alteration was to be made, took pains to put himself in a position to enforce it.

"Until the 19th inspection, May, 1869, the notes and records were sent to the Immigration Office, from thence submitted to the Governor, and if instructions were to be issued upon them, they were issued by the Immigration Department. In May, 1869, the plan was changed, the notes were submitted to the Governor, and the orders issued direct by the Government Secretary. We do not find any perceptible difference in the manner in which these orders are received and attended to, by the persons to whom they are addressed; they do not appear to pay more attention to the orders from the Government Secretary than they did to those coming through the Immigration Office. We have not been able to find a register of unanswered references in either office, but on inquiring in the Immigration Office for the answers to forty-two letters, we were furnished with sixteen, and informed that twenty-six could not be found. So in the Government Secretary's Office we received ten answers only, out of twenty-nine that we asked for; showing in both instances that about one-third only of these communications are answered. There are of course some letters answered in the best and most effectual manner, that is, by the work required being

done; and then the neglect in answering the letter is a mere want of courtesy.

"But to return to Dr. Shier's requisitions to build new hospitals. In December, 1866, Dr. Shier, at Anna Regina, 'requests that as little delay as possible be allowed to take place in the erection of a new hospital.'

"In October he writes, 'New hospital now in course of erection, and will be ready for occupation 1st January, 1868; if the wards are properly laid out this will make a very commodious hospital.' 'I did not approve of the site.' 'April, 1868, new hospital being finished, and will be in use, it is thought, in a fortnight.' 'October, 1868, old hospital still in use, requests that every effort be made to have arrangements in the new hospital completed so that it might be occupied as soon as possible. It is very much to be regretted that so much time has been consumed in completing and occupying this hospital. On the 14th April I was informed that the occupancy of the building was expected in a fortnight, and yet, six months later, matters are found in exactly the same condition. It appears that the contractor broke down in the fulfilment of his contract; but the great cause of the delay is doubtless to be attributed to the circumstance of the manager having to leave the colony in bad health. Had failing health not compelled him to be absent for several months, I feel sure the hospital would have been finished and in use soon after my visit in April.' 'May, 1869. To my regret and amazement, I found the old hospital still in use. The

remarks which I made in the foregoing entry regarding the manager, I have now to retract as being thoroughly inapplicable. I find that the manager had taken up his abode in the new hospital while a new residence was being built for himself. *It is to be remarked that fresh allotments of immigrants have been made during the whole period.* It is true that there has been comparatively little mortality among the immigrants, yet I can see no excuse for this most extraordinary conduct on the part of the manager. I cannot but look upon it as a breach of good faith.'

"On this Mr. Crosby remarks, 'There has been an application for 175 indentured immigrants for the season '69-70. I have allotted 25 to the Anna Regina estate by the *Far East*, 1869. I am of opinion not another immigrant should be allotted to the estate, or a single other immigrant, except such as already reside on the estate, be paid bounty. This is one of the finest estates in the colony, one of the most productive, and the proprietor is a very rich man.'

"In November, 1869, Dr. Shier found, 'New hospital in occupation, but only since the day before. This is one of the most unwarrantable cases of delay that has come under my notice, and strongly exhibits the apparent indifference of the manager to the comfort of the people intrusted to his care. The hospital is very scantily supplied with hospital furniture and requisites. It is stated that bedsteads, bedding, &c., have been ordered from England. Eighteen months have elapsed since I was informed that the hospital would be in occupation, and surely

ample time has been afforded to provide everything necessary for hospital use.'

"On this the following letter was written to Mr. G. H. Bascom, and his answer follows:—

"'3rd December, 1869.

"'G. H. BASCOM, Esquire,

"'SIR,—The Medical Inspector of Estates' Hospitals, in his recent Report on his inspection of estates in Essequibo, remarks on the delay which has occurred in the occupation of the new hospital at Plantation Anna Regina, and states that it is very scantily supplied with hospital furniture and requisites.

"'He adds that he was informed that bedsteads, bedding, &c., had been ordered from England, but as eighteen months have elapsed since he was told that the hospital would be in occupation, ample time has been afforded to provide everything necessary for hospital use. His Excellency trusts that this matter will receive early attention.

"'I have, &c.,

(Signed) "'J. M. GRANT,
Government Secretary.'

"'Pln. Anna Regina, 10th December, 1869.

"'SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your communication, No. 2,484, in reference to the hospital on this estate. In reply I beg to state that a new building has just been erected, at a cost of over $6,000 to the estate, containing the extent of

floorage and cubical contents prescribed by law, for the accommodation of 80 patients, being the proportion for a resident population of 800 immigrants. Forty-eight iron bedsteads, and the proper amount of bedding and hospital furniture required in addition to the present furnishings, have just been shipped from Liverpool.

"'I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient Servant,

"'G. H. BASCOM.

"'To the Honourable JAMES GRANT,
Government Secretary.'

"This was referred to Dr. Shier, who made the following note upon it:—'The Executive was informed eighteen months ago of the erection and capacity of this hospital. Mr. Bascom gives no reason why the hospital should have remained so long unapplied to its proper use; nor why the necessary furnishings should be now only shipped from Liverpool.

"'D. S., 18th December, 1869.'

"Still, in May, 1870, Dr. Shier found the hospital with strangers in it, the apartments under the hospital still used as a writing-room by overseers and clerks, and one of the wards used as a medicine room, while patients are under treatment in it. The writing-room was to have been cleared without delay six months before. An office has been built within fifteen yards of the hospital, and the room, it was said, would now be vacated. Dr. Shier adds: 'What amount

of quiet and comfort these patients can enjoy in the bustle of a medicine apartment may readily be judged of. It is from inconsiderate and unwarrantable practices like these that the Estates' Hospital system in this colony is rendered liable to just censure.'

"Upon this, Government wrote to Mr. Bascom that, 'unless the suggestions made from time to time by Dr. Shier are *not* at once carried out, all further allotment of immigrants will be stopped.'"

The Executive appears to have been as disgracefully chary as Dr. Shier in bearding so powerful a conjunction as the manager and attorney of this estate. It was, no doubt, one arising during its transitional development by means of the arriving Coolies, and could be defended on that ground with much plausibility; but it is clear that, whatever sacrifices require to be made in such a process, the Coolie should not be called upon to make any of them, still less to be subjected to awkward and even perilous inconveniences. Before leaving the Medical Inspector of Hospitals, it should be mentioned that the criticisms passed upon him by the Report do not fall on narrow shoulders. Though he was affected with Scotch timidity in using his powers, and was too often hoodwinked by clever managers, his great energy, constant attention to business, and the shifts to which he put himself to avoid accepting managerial hospitality, deserve honourable notice, as I hope they will get their reward. Even the Commissioners have a word of excuse: "We have seen how the

Immigration Agent-General has been deprived of his powers, and it is but natural to suppose that Dr. Shier took warning from what he might have seen in the Immigration Office, and contented himself with leaving it for the Government to notice, if they would, what he found wrong on the estates, satisfying himself with having laid the case before the Executive. That course was not contemplated by the law, but it seems consonant with the system on which the department is administered."

The doctors, as I shall term them, avoiding the euphemism of the ordinance, are appointed by the proprietors or attorneys. Hence the very responsible duties they have to discharge, both to the Government and the Coolie, are performed subject to the approbation of their employers, the managers. On the face of it the position is untenable, and facts and criticisms explode it altogether. Many of the doctors in the colony are men of very considerable attainments, and great skill in their profession. But the temptation to undertake more work than they can manage is dangerously strong. Of the duties cast upon them, the Commissioners have found several instances of neglect. The visit every forty-eight hours, which is carefully made by the Georgetown doctors, is sometimes in remoter districts reduced to twice a week, or less.

The injunction that the doctor should make notes of the cases in the register and case book was admitted not to be usually observed. The compounding of the medicines by the doctor, insisted upon by

the ordinance, except in certain specific cases, is never undertaken by him. Again, patients are not generally informed by the doctor of their diet. The attention given to the furniture and utensils appears to have been discreetly indifferent. "Dr. Dalton would not notice them at all unless brought specially before him; and the medical practitioner at Eliza and Mary considers it his duty not to notice anything only when 'glaringly wrong, that is, very much out of order.' That being the general rule, we were not surprised at finding all the defects and deficiencies we have already noticed in hospitals we visited."

On the other hand, Dr. Hutson assured the Commissioners that he always found the managers most willing to carry out any suggestions made by the medical man.

It is needless to go any further into the medical attendance of the estate. Its ability and integrity have been found consistent with great abuses and evasions of the law. The relation, on its present basis, is, as I have said, so indefensible in principle that it must give way before the alteration advocated by Governor Scott, and adopted in Trinidad, namely, the conversion of the doctors into Government officers. The independence of the medical officers who supervise the treatment of Coolies is essential to its proper performance; and no other consideration is worth the thought.

As to the nurses, on whom too much of the real medical treatment of the Coolie depends, there is

reported to be a peculiar opening for improvement Many of them are licensed by the Colonial Hospital, holding "certificates of competency;" others have undergone "probation and examination;" others are undoubted casuals. The law requires no qualification, and there are managers who, in that particular, respect the law. "At Golden Fleece," say the Commissioners, "the nurse, a respectable woman, who had been there about three years, had the charge of the hospital, and *made up and administered all the medicine;* she had had no training except having been a year at Taymouth Manor and for a month at the Colonial Hospital, 'and learned nothing.'" They are lucky immigrants whose employer mixes the medicines himself, as he may under the ordinance.

As to the hospital buildings, and furniture, and patients' clothing, the energetic investigations of the Commissioners have accumulated a mass of facts running through all stages, from amusing to revolting.

Dr. Shier himself had already, in one of his reports, noted that "where the estates' hospitals are not in a satisfactory condition, it will be principally found that it is on the estates on lease, estates in the market to be sold, and estates partially or wholly in the Administrator-General's hands." This the Commissioners confirmed. To such causes it must be partly attributed that the various rules as to the proportionate number of beds, spaces between beds, cubic feet of air to each person, are not unfrequently disregarded. The Medical Inspector also said in one of his reports: "I cannot but notice how frequent the disposition is,

when retrenchment of expenditure must be made, to commence with hospital expenditure." At the inquiry, Dr. Shier was asked whether he had ever heard that the expression was a common one, "Hospital expenses must be kept down." In answering *No*, the Commissioners say: "He omitted to tell us that practically he had found they were the first to be curtailed. We find here the disposition, when retrenchments are required, to commence with the hospital; and that, until embarrassed circumstances can be tided over, the comforts and conveniences of the immigrant are postponed to the convenience of the proprietors—a state of things that certainly ought not to be allowed. As soon as an estate gets into such straitened circumstances as to prevent the proprietor's fulfilling all the requirements of the law towards the immigrants, the latter ought to be removed."* All this points in the direction of the principle before hinted at,—*indentured Coolies only on wealthy estates.* It would be no unfair thing for the Government to demand that ample security should be given of the solvency of employers before allotting any immigrants to their plantations.

As to the bath-room, that luxury is mythical in most cases. "The hospital being built generally on raised pillars, a bay underneath is enclosed, and said to serve as a bath-room." At other times the "bath-room" is the passage leading to the privies, as at Nonpareil, or part of the privy itself, as at Philadelphia. "At Enmore there is a bath well worthy of imitation, built for the purpose under the hos-

* Report, &c., ¶ 605.

pital, with a supply of water laid on, and there is a good bath-room at Vergenoegen. As to the baths, we hear of "a splendid tin bath" on one estate, "a bath 14 inches in diameter" on another; sometimes a bath without a bath-room, at other times a bath-room without a bath. This extract may conclude my notice of this luxury: "At Farm, East Bank, Demerara River, and in many others, the bath-room and dead-house were the same; and at Goldstone Hall the nurse hit upon a happy expedient by which to show us a bath and a bath-room. There were three necessaries attached to that hospital; and in the middle of one of these he put a tub, too large to stand upon the floor, upon the seats, but failed to explain how it could be used."

The necessaries seem not to have been so considered in some hospitals; or, to adopt another name, the conveniences were frequently inconveniences. I need say no more on this subject, except that the Report speaks with approbation of a method of deodorisation used in the well-conducted hospital at Leonora.

The bed furniture, in many cases, conforms inadequately to the requisitions of the law. The sacks of plantain leaves for beds are easily supplied, but sheets and blankets are a luxury absent from some of the best hospitals. It appears to be the custom to give them only to patients suffering with fever. Though they are required by law, it is difficult to say whether they would always be appreciated, if supplied. Shirts are not required

by the regulations, though they are by decency, on several estates the inspector reporting that he found the patients on his visit in a state of nudity. The unexpected visits of the Commissioners gave rise to curious scenes: "Sometimes we found patients sitting *on* the shirts which had just been given to them; and, as at Goldstone Hall, we found the female nurse had hurt a patient in dressing her in her shirt, putting her bed to rights, and removing her dirty clothes, to make a neat appearance before us. At Windsor Forest we found them in all the turmoil of making things straight, and throwing the shirts at the patients for them to put on." * One case, occurring on one of the estates of the largest proprietors in the colony, is thus minuted in the Report (par. 743): "Dr. Shier found the hospital in a very unsatisfactory state. Almost all the patients were crowded into the ward in the second story. To make matters still worse, the sick-nurse had a considerable number of fowls in a coop in one of the corners. 'Everything was in a very filthy condition. The patients, *twenty-two of whom were labouring under intermittent fever*, were in a state of nudity. In the ward up-stairs, where there were two patients, the under-nurse, a grandson of the head-nurse, had the harness of a horse and the cushions of a waggon stowed away on one of the beds. I have seldom met a more unsatisfactory state of things. I am fully of opinion that the present sick-nurse is not to be trusted; she is also of an unwieldly bulk, and although she might do the

* Report, &c., ¶ 629.

work of an under-nurse, she is unfit to be at the head of a hospital.'"

As to the utensils, the Commissioners say that this requirement is not more strictly observed than any of the others.

Diet in the hospitals was the burthen of many a complaint. The diet-lists are elaborate enough, but it is doubtful whether a single hospital in the colony professes to follow them. Whatever else the Coolie may be called on to endure in hospital, this is the least pardonable of defaults. The dietary table consists of four kinds of diet—ordinary, Coolie, spoon, and milk diet.

ORDINARY DIET.

Bread . . .	8 oz.
Salt fish . . .	8 oz.
Butter . . .	1 oz., or pork 2 oz.
Plantains . .	24 oz., cooked and without husks.
Sugar . . .	2 oz.

In lieu of salt fish 8 oz. of fresh beef, or 4 oz. of salt beef may be substituted.

COOLIE DIET.

Rice	8 oz.
Salt fish . . .	4 oz.
Peas	4 oz.
Butter	1 oz., or pork 2 oz.
Curry powder .	1 drachm.
Bread or biscuit	8 oz.
Sugar	2 oz.

SPOON DIET.

Bread	4 oz.
Sago or arrowroot . .	4 oz.
Sugar	4 oz.

MILK DIET.

Spoon diet with 1 pint of fresh milk.

A proprietor who had observed some reflections of mine on the hospital treatment requested me to consider whether I could expect butter to be given to Coolies, knowing as I did how expensive it was; and he was particularly animated against curry powder. Now either these things are proper and necessary, or they are not. If they are not, the sooner they are expunged from the list the better; if they are, that "firm hand" which with a sort of infatuated ghostly persistency Dr. Shier was always holding up in a threatening attitude should be laid down very sternly. The Executive cannot afford to excuse any looseness whatever in the diet of sick Coolies—suffering, perhaps, from general lowering of the system. The instances of this deficiency which the Report supplies are many and glaring. On one estate only rice and salt fish were given when "Coolie diet" was ordered; on another two biscuits were added to those two articles, the rest omitted, and short weight given; on another no bread or biscuit was issued in the dietary; on another no pork or butter; on another no peas; on many others short weights, or issues by measure instead of by weight; on other estates *half rations!* In fact, there is evidence of the utmost, and I regret to add the cruellest, disregard of the obligation—one not only of contract, but of humanity. It occurs not alone on poor estates, but on some of the best, with managers whose names are household words, and with attorneys at the top of the tree.

At Providence the sick-nurse withheld a portion of bread from patients for disorderly conduct and

neglecting their sores.* This sick-nurse had been eight years in the hospital, and Dr. Shier recommended that his offence should be passed over.

At Cullen, "upon examining the books, the Commissioners found during the past summer repeated entries by the doctor, complaining that the patients were not properly fed, that the orders he gave were not carried out, and that *men were sinking from insufficient and improper nourishment.* Some of these cases were since dead. One child was brought to the hospital so ill from sores, that the doctor recommended the prosecution of the black woman, Bella Roberts, who had charge of the babies. Perbucus complained that he got *only one biscuit* this morning and a third of a pan of rice by way of Coolie diet. The dispenser explained that all provisions are served out from the manager's house by his own housekeeper. But it appears biscuits were sent in this morning in quantity sufficient only *to give one all round.*" No wonder "the patients actually complained of hunger." †

Rations generally are not issued by weight. "At De Kinderen"—one of the finest estates in the colony, whereof Mr. Trotman, J.P., &c., is resident proprietor, with a difference of twenty-four hours in their visit, the balances would have been found wanting by the Commissioners — "a balance-scale had been procured the day before."

"At Cotton Tree we found a candidate for admission fasting until the doctor came. *He had fasted*

* Report, &c., ¶ 669. † Ib., ¶ 689.

for twenty-four hours at the least, and might have starved for eighteen more. It is stated that the sick-nurse was discharged for this."

If this portion of the Commissioners' Report awakens indignation throughout England, the planters of British Guiana ought not to be surprised. It conclusively shows that the gross cruelty of neglect and of defrauding of his rights a helpless bondman may be laid at the door of not a few wealthy persons. It proves a dangerous demoralisation among the doctors, by whom these things cannot but have been known or suspected. Last, and worst of all, it shows a widespread indifference to the obligations of the Immigration Laws, and a paralysis in the Executive which ought to enforce them. If such important provisions break down, what are we to hope for the rest? There is an indignant ring in the Commissioners' conclusion on this point with which I will close a very painful subject:*—

"We have been informed by several managers, such as Mr. Russell, that he does not observe the diet tables, but if he sees a patient, who he thinks requires feeding up, he orders him food, without reference to the doctor, or the tables, and this, we have no doubt, he does; but no traces of such orders are readily to be found in the hospital accounts, unless they be kept with scrupulous exactness, as at Goedverwagting, and on that account more exact records than are now kept of the diet ordered and issued, should be insisted on in justice to all persons interested.

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 730—733.

"Yet further, in all this, we cannot but observe a great recklessness, on the part of the managers of estates, to the consequences which must follow the repudiation of rule, and the substitution of private judgment, however well-meaning. To take an instance from another part of our inquiry—that a man in Mr. Russell's position could say in evidence, in answer to a question if he could show the section which would justify a particular course: 'No, I cannot; I go more by long experience. Probably, I know what suits the labourers and suits me better than the law-makers,' points to a fashion of thinking which would leave little hope of the reform of abuses, if it were not that those in authority seem not yet to have set seriously at work to try and reform them. To many managers, no doubt, the prescription of 'curry stuff' seems a piece of sentimental philanthropy on the part of the framers of the circular. They would not like themselves to eat nothing but boiled rice and salt fish one day, and boiled rice and peas, without salt, the next; but they know many Coolies get no more, and they don't see how any such condiments can be necessary for health—at least to Coolies. Still less do they appreciate the sense of wrong, the feeling of being trampled on, which fills the mind even of a Coolie, when deprived, not so much of some of his rice, as of some of his rights.

"It is out of the question to plead that the diet tables are extravagantly costly; 8*d.* a day seems the outside that is spent on any one of them; and the cutting off a bit of pork here, and a biscuit there, is at once

mean and of little profit, and detrimental, because it breeds discontent.

"It is hard, no doubt, to have to deal with people who do not possess the fine habit of gratitude which bestows itself, even upon those who take some pains to give us no more than our right,—who are, indeed, not a grateful race, even when something more is given them; but until some considerable pains has been taken, not merely to concede the right, but to see that it is respected, managers have no right to say, as they do say, that the Coolies have no capacity for being grateful. This does require some pains; and does not often get them paid. Perhaps it is impossible to expect them of managers, or at all events it may be; the task would more fitly devolve upon other, and less burthened, shoulders."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MORAL AND MATERIAL WELFARE, AND CONCLUSION.

TO complete our review of the Coolie's position in British Guiana, we must take a glance at its bright side and its hopeful circumstances. For in my opinion the system has broad shoulders, and if the criticisms advanced in the preceding pages should appear to any whose interests are involved disproportionately extended, or in some instances severe, that, they should remember, is almost an inherent difficulty of criticism, one only to be neutralised by duly calling up to the mind the extent of countervailing matter that has afforded basis for so much remark.

Any one who has seen the Coolie in British Guiana is forced to admit that he has undergone a change for the better. The fawning and crouching gait of the Asiatic has been transformed into the independent, and even proud, walk of a better race. Men of low caste and lower hopes have acquired what to them is wealth; and many have improved in every way under the discipline of labour.

There is now, I should judge, a most hopeful field for education. The number of schools is as yet inade-

quate to the requirements of the colony; but two Indian gentlemen—one a clergyman of the Anglican Church, the other a Wesleyan—appear to be taking great interest in remedying this defect, as well as in endeavouring to disseminate Christianity among people situated, one would think, in peculiarly favourable circumstances to receive it. But as yet missionary effort has made no impression. It is possible that were the managers and overseers more frequently married, and were they and their wives imbued with religious sentiments, the powerful influence they could then bring to bear on their immigrants would result in a considerable conversion to Christianity. Tropical Christianity is, however, a plant of curious and difficult growth.

* "The defenders of the Asiatic immigration to the West Indies have always been careful to point out, besides the material advantages offered to the immigrant, the prospect of moral improvement which it opened to the race. It has been held up as a means of carrying Western civilisation, and even Western faith, to the nations of India and China. No doubt the planting of an Asiatic population in the West Indies, if it lives and takes root there, cannot be without important influence upon the habits and characters of those who are so transplanted, and it is impossible to doubt that with the means of material advancement fairly opened to them, moral progress may be expected to follow in its train.

"For the present this great experiment in colonisa-

* Report, &c., ¶¶ 891, 892.

tion is merely in embryo. The Coolie and the Chinese population has only to a small extent taken root in the soil. Little or no familiar intercourse has sprung up between them and the European and African races, and there is hardly any intermixture of blood. It is not surprising therefore that to all outward appearance the Coolies are as much East Indian, and the Chinamen Chinese, as when they first landed in the colony. They acquire after some years the use of an English patois, more or less intelligible. They shake off, no doubt, a good many prejudices, and become more sensible than when in their own country of the world of ideas which lies without them; and all that we may say, however, of their acquirements in the direction of European cultivation is, that they show a readiness, in small matters of dress and habit, to engraft other fashions upon their old Oriental ones."

A mere sight of the Coolies, as I have described them, in Georgetown streets, on my first arrival, shows that in material prosperity a large number have benefited by their introduction into the colony. Many of them invest their bounty-money in a cow, and from the sale of its milk continue to increase their wealth until they can buy another. Some own as many as six or seven. Others drive a less healthy but more profitable business in lending out their money on usury to the new Coolies, who before they are acclimatised can rarely earn enough to live upon. One sharp Indian, who took a great interest in the Commission, and gave me a great deal of information, brought me a list of debts due to him on one estate amounting, I think, to nearly

$1,200. If this was proof of need it was also proof of well-being, and a considerable evidence of confidence, on the part of my friend, in the ultimate power of his countrymen to repay him. On many estates the Coolies are allowed free pasturage for their cattle; on others —as at Leonora—they are allowed to tether them on the ground near their houses, and to cut grass upon orders issued by the manager, which he reserves to himself the right to cancel.

The number of immigrant depositors in the British Guiana Savings Bank on June 13th, 1870, was 1,817, and their deposits amounted to $138,425.13, over $70 a head. The very large amount of silver, and even gold, worn on the persons of the Coolie men and women is of course not calculable; but it is enough to convey an idea of a wide distribution of wealth. Much of this, no doubt, is the mere product of the indenture money, and not very much of it the result of regular earnings, as the rate of wages given by the Commissioners indicates:* "From papers submitted by the Immigration Agent-General the Commissioners gather that in twelve ships which sailed with returning Indian immigrants between the 15th November, 1834, and the 11th November, 1869, 2,828 immigrants took away with them money acquired in the colony to the amount of $453,369.70, or £94,452 0*s.* 5*d.* The whole number who have returned is 6,281; but the money of those who went by five ships out of twenty was not officially remitted, and cannot now be ascertained. The return of the

* ¶¶ 854, 855.

Emigration Commissioners for 1870, which includes some items estimated rather than ascertained, gives a total of £116,473 17*s.* 6*d.* It seems of little use to calculate averages in this connection, or to guess at the amount of cash and value of jewellery on their persons, which the immigrants very carefully conceal. The number of those who go back is but a small fraction of those who come, and no attempt has hitherto been made to discover whether the method by which the well-to-do among them have made their money was one equally open to the majority of their compatriots.

"To the above estimate must be added 421 passengers who embarked by the *Ganges* on the 10th September, 1870, carrying with them through official channels $47,438.95. This convoy we had an opportunity of inspecting before they set sail. There was one man, aged thirty-nine, with his wife and three children, all born in the colony, who took back $1,100 of his own, and $200 in the name of his wife. Another, with wife and two children, took $1,000. It seemed to be the fathers of families who had thriven best; but we did not succeed in finding any one who had made a large sum of money without having been aided to his wealth by trade, and having lived for some time in the colony as a free labourer. In particular, we noticed each of the two families above mentioned as having come from Berbice, where they had been engaged in cattle farming. A third, returning with his wife, and with the reputation of being rich, took with him officially $800.. He, however, had come out

but eighteen months before, was paying his own passage back, and had made his money in the interval by begging, in his character of a Brahmin."

According to the planters' returns, the amount paid to the immigrant Chinese and Indians last year amounted to more than $2,000,000.

Taking a fair review of the whole system, *it is one which, spite of its disabilities, its difficulties, its present evils, is full of promise, and in my belief can be made, with care and skill and honest endeavour, not only an organisation of labour as successful as any hitherto attempted, but one leading to almost colossal benefits.*

In considering the general relation to each other of the Coolies and planters in British Guiana, it is clear that for the permanent benefit and community of both, the policy of the Colonial legislation must needs be considerably altered. It has hitherto been a policy of coercion where only a policy of broad and liberal kindness can succeed, or indeed be admissible. It has conferred unlimited power on the planters, and reduced that of the Coolies almost to *nil.* When pressure becomes so tight, its natural effect is seen in Leonora riots and murders or half-murders of managers.

One improvement ought not to be overlooked. It has been most sagaciously hinted by the Commissioners that while the legal rod has been rather strictly applied, the incitement of reward has not been held out to the immigrants.

"It is our belief that in confining themselves to the penal aspect of the labour system and ignoring

its possible milder side, the planters have missed a necessary element in carrying out with success their great experiment. In the neighbouring colony of Surinam, the apprenticeship of the slaves, which will terminate this year, has been regulated in part by this principle; and the indentures of all immigrants imported into that colony have contained a similar provision. Three hundred tasks, regulated by a fixed tariff, are prescribed to be performed during the year. The task is heavy; but it can be exceeded by a good labourer within the working hours of the day. Apprenticed slaves who have performed their fifteen hundred tasks have been set free already, before the expiration of their indentures: while the Barbadian, who has bound himself for three years, has the satisfaction of knowing that he can hasten his enfranchisement by performing his nine hundred tasks within the time. It is a noticeable fact that under this system, which certainly does not err on the side of liberality in matters of detail—in the number and nature of the tasks required—the Surinam planters have been able to do what no Demerara planter has accomplished, namely, to get the Barbadians to indenture themselves for a period of years. The labourer perceives, on taking bounty, that he will be able to make some profit out of his bargain by working himself free before the expiration of the term for which the bounty is calculated; and the employer reaps at least a compensating advantage in the saving of supervision and hospital expenses, which follows upon his Barbadian - indentured

labourers doing each the work of two." I have suggested that a similar tariff to that of Surinam should be adopted in Demerara, and on that basis this arrangement also might be introduced. The Commissioners propose as the limit of measurement under the peculiar wages-standard of British Guiana, the task *money-value* instead of the task of the Dutch tariff. This, although they have proposed to do away with the provision which enjoins performance of five such tasks per week as a minimum of labour. It would appear more symmetrical, however, and that not seldom means more politic, to make the standard of reward correlative with the standard of punishments. I am convinced that the more deeply the matter is investigated, the more clearly it will appear that many of the difficulties and anomalies of legislation and administration in British Guiana, are due to the attempts constantly made to bolster up their imperfect standard of wages.

Anyone who will read the sketch of "A Satisfactory Penal Labour Law" in the Report,* will, I think, agree with me that it is the least satisfactory of its suggestions. It professes to offer for vague terms others more definite and more easy of application. It proposes to inflict fines or imprisonment for the offence of "wilful indolence," for the reason that "In all good penal laws there must be some one word at least which will admit the equitable jurisdiction of a magistrate." Moreover, if I understand their proposal, the labour is to be measured by time

* See ¶¶. 435—440.

and not by results, a method which I fear any planter would consider, with anything short of excessive overseering, quite impracticable. Indeed, this attempt, by minds so capable, to construct a satisfactory penal law consistent with the present wages-system of British Guiana, proves its impracticability. The further proposal in the Report that the *livret*, or book of work, should be given to each labourer to check off his own daily work, seems admirable, and will probably not be objected to by the Demerara managers.

The legislation of the future needs to be largely in the direction of facilitating the Coolie's own remedies, and of increasing the protection to be afforded to him by his appointed guardians. By assenting to this, the planters can lose nothing but money, if they even lose that, while they will gain in self-respect and in the greater happiness of their workpeople. Under any circumstances, England cannot be forgetful of her duty to her ignorant and unprotected Indian subjects. The more firm and manly our voice on the question now, the better will our purpose be appreciated by the planters, and in my heart I believe the better chance will there be of a kindly settlement. If we can avoid putting the whole system on defence for its life while we indicate and strive to remedy its blots, we shall find, as I can vouch from my own knowledge, among the most powerful planters not only friendly but earnest allies.

Another point of great importance calls for our constant attention. It should be carefully borne in

mind that Coolie immigration in the West Indies, and especially in British Guiana, is in a state of transition. The supply of labour is gradually creeping up to the point at which it will meet the demand, and a wise forecast dictates that it should never be allowed actually to reach, certainly never to overlap, that line. At the present moment a fall of one halfpenny a pound in sugar would on many estates make the difference between a large profit and a dead loss; a fall of one penny a pound would, according to Mr. Oliver, make the best estate in the colony lose money. Greater fluctuations, or a protracted fall—things which are not impossible, especially if beet-root cultivation should be introduced, as it is likely to be, into Ireland—might severely test the ability of the planting community to carry the enormous artificial burthen of labour it has imposed upon itself. The failure of a few large estates in British Guiana would give the Government no easy problem to solve, since it is scarcely probable that at the same time an expansion would be occurring on other estates, sufficient to absorb the numbers thus thrown back on the hands of the Executive. To this contingency our own Government is bound to look forward with a very jealous regard. There is danger that speculators, in the pursuit of profits, may not have their eyes open to the results of failure. An inordinate immigration, causing an inflation, at any time liable to collapse, would, on that collapse, be least damaging to the speculator; it would throw the Coolie on the tender mercies of Government. The tender mercies of Government are

often like those of the wicked. At present there is a temptation, natural and not easily reprehensible, to the planters to forget the future, and to look only to the smooth-sailing success of the present. But, if Coolie immigration is to continue, they must lay now the foundations of its permanence. It cannot be permanent on its present basis. The artificial immigration must gradually give way to a system more and more natural, as the reasons for its artificiality cease to exist. We should look forward to the time when immigrants shall leave India for British Guiana, if at all, on a freer engagement, and when a large proportion of those who immigrate shall establish themselves in the colony, and build up a new system of labour. The planters are just now content if they get ten years' service out of a man, and send him home again. But the proportion of those who return to the numbers arriving must yearly become less; and to meet the consequent state of the labour market both restraint and forecast will be required. At this moment, for instance, there is an indisposition on the part of the Executive to encourage the settlement of Coolies on land. Eager to make their money, and to go elsewhere to spend it (one can hardly blame them for it), the planters are jealous of establishing a system which, however politic for the time to come, appears at present to be restricting the numbers of cheap labourers. Only the strong resolution of the Home Government can regulate this movement; one which alone will place the future of the Coolie in Guiana on a safe footing.

It is possible this might for the time put a check on the rapid extension of cultivation; but the check would be a healthy check, and in the long-run lead to the best results for every one concerned.

In taking leave of my subject, it only remains to me to hope that my endeavour in this inquiry to strike the even balance between truth and right has not been unsuccessful. I have spoken freely. Should I, in the course of a review of such numerous and complicated incidents, relations, and interests, have unconsciously done injustice to any person, or to any portion of the subject, it will cause me a very deep and lasting regret.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.

MR. DES VŒUX'S LETTER.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, ST. LUCIA,
25th December, 1869.

MY LORD,—I have long had the intention, which I have been prevented by various causes and lately by the pressure of other public duties from carrying out, of drawing your Lordship's attention to the state of the Colony of British Guiana, where I was lately holding the appointment of stipendiary magistrate when your Lordship graciously acceded to my application for promotion.

2. But in view of the serious disturbances which lately took place at plantation *Leonora*, and the more recent meeting of West Indian proprietors in London, which has shown that, while alive to the unsettled state of the colony, and anxious of obviating its effects, they are either unaware of, or are regardless of removing, its causes, I felt that I should no longer delay the performance of what I conscientiously believe an obligatory duty.

3. Knowing as I do that there is a very wide-spread discontent and dissatisfaction existing throughout the immigrant population, both Indians and Chinese (and especially among the latter, though their small numbers make the fact less apparent), and believing as I do that these ill feelings, which have already vented themselves in disturbance, will ere long, unless checked by remedial measures, result in far more serious calamities, and believing also that my five years' peculiar experience in the colony enables me to throw a light on the causes of grievance, which may not reach your Lordship

from any other source, and may be useful at the present moment, I trust that I need no other apology for communicating with you on a subject unconnected with my present duties.

4. If your Lordship should approve, I would in a future letter explain the peculiar grievances of which the Chinese have to complain, and which I believe to be so real and just as to furnish a strong argument against a renewal of that description of immigration, unless under far more stringent supervision. At present I propose to confine myself to those suffered by all classes of immigrants alike.

5. To superficial observation it would seem, that persons who have been rescued from a state said to be bordering on destitution in their own country, who are provided with free house-room, regular work and wages when they are in health, and in sickness have the advantages of a hospital, the attendance of a medical man and medicines free of expense, who have moreover a magistrate always at hand to hear their complaints, and a department of officers with the especial duty of securing their good treatment, can have no ground for dissatisfaction. A closer scrutiny, however, would detract much from the apparent value of these advantages, and would show that some of them at least are more nominal than real.

6. I propose to point out that each of them is in fact a separate cause of discontent, and in each case most respectfully to suggest what appear to me the best remedial measures.

7. And, first, as to the medical men who attend estates. These gentlemen have the right to retain as patients in hospital all sick immigrants, and to order for them at the estate's expense nourishing food and medicine. It would be thought that managers would always see their advantage in providing these of good quality. I fear, however, that there are many who are not sufficiently enlightened to take this view, and I have strong reason for believing that on some estates the food at least usually provided in hospital, in all but the severer cases, is of a wretched description, and that this fact is well known to the medical men, who dare not make complaint.

8. I am, moreover, confident that it is a common practice of medical men to discharge immigrants from treatment before they are completely cured; and to this may be attributed a large proportion of the cases of so-called idleness which are brought before magistrates. By the strict letter of the law, an indentured immigrant is bound to do his daily task of work, if he is not in hospital; and though the magistrate has a discretionary power of declining to convict, if he believes the accused is physically unable to work, it is difficult for him, on account of the accomplished malingering propensities of the Coolies, to decide in other than extreme cases against the expressed opinion of the doctor.

9. The consequence of this I believe is, that of the great numbers of immigrants who are weekly committed to gaol for breaches of contract, a very considerable proportion are convicted of neglect to do what they were physically incapable of doing; and whether my belief is just or not, I know that a sense of the injustice of such convictions is a very potent cause of the prevailing discontent.

10. The remedy which I would most respectfully suggest for this serious evil, and which I have urged without success on more than one Governor, is simple.

11. It is to make the estates' medical men Government officers, payable either out of the Immigration Fund, or by a tax directly levied for this purpose on the proprietors.

12. At present their tenure of office is almost entirely dependent on the will, or rather the caprice, of the managers of estates. Several of the most upright of them have at different times deplored to me their position in this respect; and have shown me that any serious complaint on their part in respect of abuses which they saw going on under their eyes would only be followed by the loss of their livelihood, and the instalment in their practice of less scrupulous practitioners.

13. It is scarcely to be wondered at that few are to be found sufficiently high-minded, especially when they have families dependent upon them, to adopt so dangerous a course. One,

however, to my knowledge, did so, and he has in consequence, though known to be of great skill and ability in his profession, obtained but a very small practice, while estates almost at his door were entrusted to a person who is notoriously incompetent.

14. I could mention several startling instances from my own observation of the evils attending this dependence of medical men. But two of more than ordinary gravity your Lordship will probably deem sufficient for my purpose.

15. (1.) A Chinese immigrant had been dreadfully beaten by an Indian watchman, while in the act of stealing. He was taken to the estate's hospital with five fractures of limbs—two compounds and three simple, both legs and both arms being broken, if I recollect rightly. His wounds were dressed by the sick-nurse, but the doctor on arrival ordered his removal in a cart to his own estate, a distance of two and a quarter miles, the very day on which he had received the injuries. The natural result followed. The patient died the next day. On the inquest, held before me as magistrate of the district, the doctor justified his order on the ground that the man was "doing extremely well" (if I recollect the words rightly) when he was removed, while another medical man, who attended the patient on his own estate, gave his opinion that he would probably have lived but for his removal. I sent the proceedings in this case to the Attorney-General,* but no notice was taken, as far as I know, of the doctor's conduct, who sacrificed a life in order to save a trifling expense to his employer.

16. It is a significant fact that this gentleman, although holding a lucrative Government appointment, and having a large practice in town, is employed by several large estates at a distance of several miles, and that some of these are separated from him by the river, which, owing to the ferry-boat ceasing to run, is practicably impassable at night, while they are within easy reach of two equally competent but reputedly more scrupulous medical men residing on the same bank of the river.

17. (2.) A Coolie boy about twelve years old, a general

* Mr. Trounsell Gilbert, acting.

favourite on his estate, had been barbarously murdered for the sake of the silver and gold ornaments on his person. An inquest had been held before an ordinary justice of the peace, and an open verdict returned. On reading the evidence, I ordered the examination of the body and a further *post mortem* examination. Your Lordship will find it difficult to believe, but it is nevertheless true, that it was then for the first time discovered by the surgeon that one of the boy's arms had been cut off. The nature of the first examination can therefore be imagined.

18. The medical man who was thus neglectful of his duty has one of the best, if not the best, estate's practice in the colony; and although resident in town, is allowed to have the sole medical charge of a hospital, which in my time contained frequently over eighty patients, at a distance of seven miles, and several other hospitals at distances of from four to six miles, one of them in a direction opposite to that of the others.

19. The present Governor contemplated, he informed me, a reform of this and similar abuses, and I can well understand that the heavy legacy of duty and difficulty which was left to him has prevented its speedy accomplishment.

20. These illustrations of the system of medical attendance were both derived from my personal experience in one district. From all accounts I believe them to be by no means exceptional, and I would remind your Lordship that there are ten other districts in the colony containing sugar estates.

21. The reform which I propose would not only render all the medical men more fearless in the performance of their duty, but would give even the more conscientious among them increased power of usefulness. Their practice would be concentrated, and they would avoid the necessity which now exists of making visits at long distances, while rivals are in charge of hospitals in their immediate neighbourhood. The change would therefore be an equal boon to the profession and to the immigrants.

21.* The independence of the stipendiary magistrate is of even greater importance to the immigrants than that of the

doctors. But, at present, these officers are almost equally, though not as directly, subject to planting influence; and their decisions, in consequence, are, I believe, the chief cause of the prevailing discontent. They have, for the most part, risen from inferior positions, and have been long resident in the colony before their appointment as magistrates. They have thus insensibly acquired that awe of the powerful planting interest which more or less pervades all classes and reaches to the highest places.

22. Moreover, while by their antecedents and their education they are, as a rule, not superior, in position and emoluments they are actually inferior, to the managers of estates who form their society, and are the chief suitors in their courts.

23. Again, these latter are enabled by the large resources at the command of the estates, in many ways (singly too insignificant to describe) to soften the harsher features of the magistrate's life; and have still larger means of heaping upon him trouble and annoyance.*

24. Your Lordship will readily understand that against such persons and in the courts of such magistrates an immigrant is by no means certain of obtaining his rights, and I do not hesitate to assert, not only from what I have commonly heard, but from personal observation, that they do not; and that they are thus often reduced to a position, which in some respects is not far removed from slavery. The most trifling

* As an illustration of the low comparative estimation in which the stipendiary magistrates are held in Demerara, I may mention that they are habitually known among persons who claim to represent "education and intelligence" by an opprobrious nickname peculiar to that colony. The Government, moreover, in its public notices, assists in degrading their position by almost always, if not always, placing them after "the Gentlemen in charge of estates." As to the character and social position of these, I would refer your Lordship to the report to his Government of a highly educated and intelligent Hungarian gentleman, Colonel Figglemesey, who is Consul of the United States; a report which, though made by a comparative stranger in the colony, and within a year of his arrival (1864), confirms to a great extent many of the statements of this communication as to the condition of the indentured immigrants.

offences too often subject them to loss of wages and exorbitant fines, or the alternative of certain punishment in gaol, and they are governed, not by kindness and good treatment, but through fear of the severity of the law.*

25. There are some well-known managers who give out publicly that the immigrants on their estates shall be always, during the hours of work, either actually at work, or in the hospital, or in gaol; a rule which can undoubtedly be enforced by the strict letter of the law, but which, invariably and rigorously carried out, inflicts extreme hardship in many individual instances, especially in the case of women who are *enceinte*,† or nursing young children, or when the immigrants are weakened from the effects of fever and illness, but being convalescent are not retained in the hospital.

26. It is commonly said that the Governor has the power of counteracting the influence of the planters to a great extent by changing the districts of magistrates who have become too popular with them. But this power, instead of checking, has, as frequently used, contributed in fact to increase this influence; for it is generally believed, whether truly or not I forbear to express an opinion, that changes of districts, which have been ordered of late years, have been brought about not on account of the magistrates' familiarity with the planters, but of their being obnoxious to them. Changes, unless for some

* I speak only of the majority of the estates. There are a very few notable exceptions, which, as will be shown below, have reaped both direct and indirect advantages from the better treatment of their labourers.

† A manager was once highly indignant with me for refusing to punish for neglect to perform the ordinary task of work a woman who pleaded her delicate condition in this respect, and was evidently by her appearance near her confinement. He actually went so far as to appeal from my decision, as a means of testing my right to withhold a conviction on such a ground. I may mention that the support of my decision in this and other immigration cases was one of the chief real, though not ostensible, causes of the hatred of the planters for the late unfortunate Chief Justice, a gentleman who incurred far more hostility in Demerara from his many sterling virtues, than from the indiscretion which was the cause of his removal from the Bench.

private reason specially asked for, are as a rule dreaded by magistrates, on account of the great expense which is necessarily involved. Owing to difficulties of carriage and, too often, of pecuniary embarrassment, they are obliged to sell their furniture and effects. The price realised by these, owing to the persons in a condition to purchase being mainly planters, is notoriously dependent on the popularity among them of their owner.

27. So that to avoid not only removal, but the loss consequent on possible removal, the magistrate has an inducement to curry favour with the planters.

28. In order to convey to your Lordship a real and vivid illustration of what I have above described, I am reluctantly compelled, from want of other means of doing so, to relate somewhat minutely my own personal experience; though I have the less fear of incurring suspicion of egotistic motives from the belief that I have already gained your Lordship's good opinion, and the knowledge that any material reward which I could hope for any service in Demerara has been already obtained from your Lordship's favour.

29. In February, 1867, during the absence on a year's leave of the regular magistrate, having been previously in a district containing only one sugar estate, I was appointed, in highly complimentary terms, by Major Mundy, then administering the government, to take charge of the most populous and important district in the colony: a recognition of my public merits the more honourable to its author in that there were at the time existing causes of private difference between us.

30. The gentleman who had been my predecessor in the district is by common repute one of the best and most impartial of the magistrates. He is possessed of some private means, and as the district extends to an equal distance on either side of Georgetown, and thus enables residence there, he is comparatively independent of the planters and their society. He is moreover from his age, long service, and experience entitled to more than ordinary respect.

31. His district, as I found it, may therefore be taken,

for my purpose, as a fair, if not a favourite, sample of the others.

32. Almost the first, if not the first, week of my entry upon my new duties, I found confined in the "lock-ups" of the police stations a number of persons, and immigrants among others, who had been arrested without warrant, on the mere order of managers of estates, for neglect of duty and other simple breaches of contract. On the mere sight of the charges I, of course, discharged them, as being in illegal custody, and, continuing this practice subsequently, I at once aroused the indignation of several influential managers, who severally, at one time or another, in no very courteous language, threatened legal proceedings and other means of intimidation. But finding that their pressure did not affect my course, and that it was moreover supported by the law, they devised various contrivances to evade its effects.

33. I should be occupying too much of your Lordship's time by particularising these, but I would venture to describe one as characteristic of the class which furnished its author.

34. The magistrate sits as a rule only once a week at each police station. From the knowledge of this the expedient* was adopted of sending the prisoners to the lock-ups the day after the court, in order to insure their being at the least a week in confinement, "remands" being provided from brother managers who were also justices of the peace.

35. To defeat so glaring a breach of the law, I was obliged to order the police at each station to forward me daily returns of the prisoners, and thus the evil was eventually checked.

36. I found that it had been the practice to bring before the magistrate for breaches of contract the immigrants of particular estates in gangs, for the purpose of their being tried altogether, and thus more rapidly disposed of, and my refusal to allow this practice was taken as a great grievance. As the

* Subsequent experience has convinced me that this expedient is a common one throughout the country, even in the districts of the most complacent magistrates, as it insures some punishment, is done with perfect impunity, and obviates the trouble of prosecuting in court.

charges are nine times out of ten for various forms of neglect to work, an offence which, except in the rare instance of a conspiracy, is never "joint," and involves in each case different circumstances and a different line of defence, your Lordship will understand that my course was necessitated by the commonest dictates of justice. Though, possibly, in the large majority of cases the immigrants are really idle and culpable, the practice which I have described must have rendered it almost impossible to detect the exceptions.

37. I found in existence a practice, which I believe is still prevalent all over the colony, of forcing the doors of immigrants' houses for the purpose of what is called turning them out to work, and also of doing the same and searching their rooms without warrant for stolen goods, and even sometimes when there was only a suspicion of theft. I frequently suggested to the immigrants in their complaints respecting such acts that they should bring criminal charges against the aggressors; but, although their fears invariably prevented their adoption of this course, I believe that the mere hint had the effect of checking a practice which, I was given to understand, had never before met even with reproof from the Bench.

38. I found that invidiously distinct positions in court were assigned to managers of estates, some of them, on the ground of their being justices of the peace, being allowed to remain on the Bench even during the trial of their own cases.* This may seem a trivial matter, and in England it probably would be so, but it is otherwise in a country where race-jealousies are so predominant, and where suspicion of undue favour is so easily and often, I fear, so justly aroused. Indeed, my further experience convinced me more and more that the tolerance of such a practice was the origin of much discontent, as giving the appearance of partiality even to the conscientious magistrate.

39. In this district the ordinarily extreme severity of the

* One of these indeed was made highly indignant by my refusing to permit his whispering to me upon the subject of a case before me in which he was complainant.

magistrate's work, which involves the trial annually of between four to five thousand separate informations and complaints, besides inquests and depositions for the Superior Court, was greatly increased in my case, not only by attempted reforms of the above abuses, but by another circumstance for which I was in no way responsible.

40. The regular clerk (only one is allowed) went away on leave, and when I had, after great trouble, educated his *locum tenens* to work of which he knew but little before, the latter was removed at three days' notice, and in spite of my firm and most respectful remonstrance, and replaced by another, who had actually no acquaintance whatever with the routine of a magistrate's office; consequently I was obliged, though in very weak health, after sitting the greater part of the day, to spend a large portion of the night in teaching the simplest duties of the office, rather than give my openly-avowed enemies among the planters, who believed that they were supported by the Governor,* the opportunity of complaining that the district work was getting into arrear.

41. No complaint was, or ever could have been, made against me on this ground, and I can conscientiously say that I performed the whole of my duties thoroughly, and, as I have reason to know, to the satisfaction of the large majority of the inhabitants of the district. I was, however, for reasons not stated to me, removed from the district at a few days' notice a month before the expiration of the leave of the regular magis-

* This belief was a matter of notoriety, but in proof of it I may mention that one of my most determined and powerful enemies, whom I had curbed in various illegalities, delayed for two months, while Major Mundy was acting, and until the return of Mr. Hincks, to make a complaint against two of my decisions, which I venture to say was not only groundless, but should never have been entertained by the Executive. I respectfully remonstrated against its being referred to me, both the acts complained of being the proper subject of legal appeal, but with no other effect than a reprimand. I should, however, never have referred to the subject again, but that I am otherwise unable to show in the strongest light the pressure under which a magistrate may be subject in Demerara, and how very strong are his inducements to quietly submit to the planters' wish.

trate, and the public naturally concluded that the planters had been the cause.

42. After an interval of eight months, during which I had no concern with immigrants, I was again, at a few days' notice, and without reasons given, and at an expense of £250 to myself, removed* to another district which I had been offered and declined a few months before, my respectful request for only a month's delay on the ground of peculiar inconvenience to myself being refused.

43. In the new district, called that of the West Coast, which is only second in importance to that above mentioned, I found all the abuses before alluded to existing in an even more exaggerated form, and moreover that cruelties were being practised on the immigrants, apparently without check or hindrance.

44. The manager of the largest estate, which, as making annually close upon two thousand hogsheads of sugar, is second to none in the British possessions, was brought before me on the complaint of a Coolie for assault.

45. It appeared from the evidence that the man had been knocked down for leaving the sugar-house at eight o'clock on Sunday morning (a day on which the immigrants are legally entitled to rest), he having been at work, with the mere intermission of meals, from an early hour on the Saturday previous.†

* Two days before this occurred I had firmly but respectfully declined to disclose officially a private conversation which occurred at my own table.

† I have strong reason for believing, though the fact is concealed from the authorities, that it is no uncommon practice to enforce from the immigrants (in spite of the law) from sixteen to twenty hours' work in the sugar-house. In proof, I may mention that a part proprietor of several large estates, Mr. Quintin Hogg (a partner in the firm of Bosanquet, Curtis, & Co.), expressed to me, during his visit to Demerara last year, his horror at finding that the immigrants on one of his estates had been for some days worked for twenty-two hours per day, and added that the manager was aggrieved at his interference in ordering the employment of relays. It is hardly possible to conceive that human nature could have stood so severe a strain, and the time may have been exaggerated; but inasmuch as the statement, as coming from a proprietor, was in the nature of a confession, it could hardly have been far from the truth.

46. Another manager, at an almost equally large estate, was proved before me to have knocked down a Coolie immigrant and to have kicked him repeatedly while on the ground, causing bruises about his chest and other parts of his body.

47. With respect to this "gentleman," I further was informed afterwards that he had been repeatedly guilty of similar acts, and that the sufferers had been either afraid to complain, or believed that there would be little use in doing so. On one occasion, however, the assault had been upon a Coolie who had saved money, and who, having employed a lawyer, compelled his assailant to pay a large sum to compromise an action for damages in the Supreme Court.

48. In these cases I fined the guilty persons heavily, and informed them that a second offence would involve either imprisonment or the sending of the case before the Supreme Court. I believe that this had the effect of checking the evil to a great extent for the time at least. But it is a significant fact that the first of these offences was committed on plantation *Leonora* where the disturbance broke out three months after my departure.

49. The reform of all these abuses was not accomplished without arousing against me again the enmity of the planting body, while my compulsory residence among them gave them opportunities of displaying it in a more disagreeable form.

50. The simplest and plainest public duty, whenever clashing with the supposed interests of an individual, was instantly treated as a personal injury. Beginning with the withdrawal of ordinary courtesy, the managers, as one after another was interfered with in his malpractices, at length in concert began to subject me to a series of petty insults and annoyances which were beginning to make life intolerable. Without a description of these your Lordship will readily understand that they were easily in their power in the case of one who was living alone upon a sugar estate (no house being procurable elsewhere), and whose only neighbours were persons connected with the plantations.

51. After other expedients had failed of effect, and a new

Governor having by this time arrived, they at length attacked me in the press, availing themselves of a newspaper called the *Colonist*, which is the organ of the planting interest.

52. I mention this, because the occasion which called forth the attack singularly illustrates the spirit of the planting body.

53. The person offended I had believed to have been more high-minded than his fellows, and capable of appreciating strict performance of duty, even when apparently adverse to his own interest. For this reason, and because I was informed that he never entered a magistrate's court, I had accepted from him a short time previously some trifling hospitality.

54. However, when I had discharged from custody, as being in illegal confinement, three of his Chinese labourers, who had been arrested in their own houses, without warrant, for mere breach of contract, this gentleman came deliberately down to the police station, where I was holding court, and grossly insulted me before a crowd of people and a large number of managers, who had evidently collected for the purpose of witnessing the scene. Having no power of committing for contempt, I could merely order his removal from the court, but as he was a special justice of the peace, and, therefore, the last who should have set such an example, I appealed in person to the Governor for the purpose of having him removed from the Bench. But neither on that occasion nor on any other, except during the short *régime* of Major Mundy, did I receive support from the Executive against a planter. I was in too weak health (having been unable for some weeks previously to walk without support, and been subject to continual attacks of fever) to press the point warmly at the time, and your Lordship's gracious offer of my present appointment reaching me immediately afterwards, I was relieved from a painful position which my physical condition could not have supported much longer.

55. The article in the *Colonist* of March 2nd,* above referred to, while ostensibly written for another purpose, set forth the real grievance against me, viz., that I did not "please

* The article referred to was published on March 24th.—[ED. C.]

the planters." As to my particular act complained of, viz., the discharge of the three Chinese, the essential fact is omitted, that their arrest had been without warrant. While I, of course, took no notice of the attack, I found an unexpected defender in the *Creole*, the organ of the coloured races. The articles in that paper of the 29th and 31st, though containing trifling errors and remarks which might have been better omitted, are nevertheless a complete answer to the attack, and are most useful as showing the opinion of intelligent coloured people on the manner in which justice is usually administered. Ultimately, the planting organ threatened an appeal, which was, however, very advisedly never attempted, as the exposure of the legality of my course would have precluded from a contrary one more complacent magistrates in other districts. But a movement was on foot when the news of my promotion arrived to obtain from the Executive my removal from the district, though I have no reason to believe that such pressure would have had any effect on Mr. Scott.

56. Had I been ever unduly lenient to the coloured races, and could I have been considered in any sense their champion, it would have been easy to understand the estimation in which, I am proud to say, I was held by them, and the bitter enmity of the planters. But this was very far from being the case. No magistrate was, I believe, ever more severe on proved crime and misconduct, and in proof I may mention that in the eleven months during which I held office in the first district named I ordered more flogging than had ever taken place before in a similar time, and out of a population of twenty thousand at the most I sentenced over twelve hundred* to imprisonment with hard labour, and of these probably two-fifths were indentured immigrants convicted chiefly of breaches of contract. During the same time, however, I have the authority of the chief of the district police for saying, that the "feeding returns" of the "lock-ups" had been reduced by

* I have not the returns by me, but I know that these figures are considerably within the mark.

more than one-third, which affords some indication of the extent to which improper imprisonment had been previously carried.

57. I have, as I have said, entered thus minutely into my personal experience simply and solely as the only means within my power of proving to your Lordship that under the present system in Demerara independence and impartiality on the part of magistrates is not and cannot be the rule, and that the discontent which pervades all the labouring classes might under the circumstances be naturally expected.

58. If there was, as I trust there was, an exception in my case, I take no credit to myself whatever. Had I lived as long as most of my brother magistrates amidst the demoralizing influence of the all-pervading West Indian moral cowardice, or had I, as they mostly have, a family dependent on me, my course might have been, though I trust not, only parallel with theirs. At all events, the difficulty and even danger of any other would have been vastly increased.

59. For the reform of the system described, of which I trust I have shown the extreme and urgent need, I would most respectfully suggest the following measures as the only ones which in my opinion would thoroughly meet the exigencies of the case.

60. As I consider that the attempt would be hopeless to obtain impartiality from district magistrates in Demerara, and it is yet desirable for the sake of order that those officers should still reside in the country, I would suggest that the creation of a new and superior class, with sole jurisdiction in all cases, both civil and criminal, between employers and employed, both indentured and free, and in cases of trespass.* They should be required to reside in town, and to hold a court at each

* A common practice exists among managers of estates which are conveniently situated for the purpose of coercing the neighbouring villagers to work for them by vexatious charges of trespass. I have known cases where individuals have been thus charged for using a right of way which had existed for many years, though hundreds of others were passing over it daily whom there was no intention, or even desire, of prosecuting.

police station not more than once a month. They should moreover be invested with a power of summarily punishing illegal stoppage of wages, and also false arrests and imprisonment, both in its authors and its agents: the ordinary redress of a civil action being practically out of the reach of ninety-nine labourers out of a hundred.

61. The residence in town would secure them against much of the pressure above described, and the diminished frequency of courts would check the tendency of governing immigrants by fear rather than by good treatment.*

62. Except perhaps at first, the new measure need be attended with no expense. The district magistrates, being relieved of a large portion of their work, would be able to take charge of much larger districts, and would be able to take exclusive charge of coroners' inquests, which, when before ordinary justices, are not only attended with expense, but, as I have shown, are most unsatisfactorily conducted.

63. Seven district magistrates would, therefore, amply suffice, instead of twelve, and thus £3,500 a-year would be saved for the payment of three circuit magistrates.

64. Finally, with respect to these officers, I would respectfully suggest that they should be appointed exclusively by the Secretary of State, and from persons who had had no previous connection with the West Indies, except perhaps in an independent position, such as the army, or otherwise the object of the new creation would be partially defeated.

65. The effect of this reform would be, I feel confident, the removal of much of the prevailing discontent, not only among the immigrants, but among the Creole labourers, who are also under the present system too often, on insufficient grounds and

* That this is not only possible but profitable, I would mention the notorious fact that some of the most successful estates (as once admitted by Mr. Hincks in the Court of Policy) are those which least frequently trouble the magistrates. Mr. Clementson, a late member of the Court of Policy, who is in some respects the most successful planter in the colony (having from very humble beginnings acquired a large fortune), has not for years charged an immigrant with breach of contract.

on hardly plausible pretences, deprived of their rightful wages. Another though less potent cause of discontent among the immigrants is their house accommodation.

66. Although I believe it would be found on inquiry that the immigrants are allowed considerably less room on the average than convicts in English prisons, I do not allude to the question of "cubic space," for even if the importance of this subject has not been too much exaggerated elsewhere, I believe that when houses are as little impervious to the air as those of the lower classes in the tropics, bad ventilation, if an existent evil at all, is the least of those produced by overcrowding.

67. The great majority of the houses in the "nigger-yard" (as they are still ordinarily called) which are allotted to immigrants, are built of two stories, and consist of a number of very small rooms. These are ordinarily, as far as my limited observation has extended, from nine to ten feet square, and are divided by thin and easily-scaled partitions.

68. Most managers have, I believe, though I am far from sure, been compelled to allow a separate room to each married couple and their children, though three, four, and even more single men are, I know, frequently crowded in the same place. But married and single alike have to use passages, sheds, euphemistically termed kitchens, and other conveniences common to many others differing in caste* and sometimes in race. Moreover, from the filthy and lazy habits of the people, the occupants of the upper story are a continual source of discomfort and annoyance to those on the ground-floor, and hence, in a great measure, arise the endless quarrels, abusive language, and assaults, which occupy so large a portion of the magistrate's time.

69. A proof of the discontent of the Coolies with this state

* Although all Indians lose their caste on leaving Hindostan, the distinctions and jealousies are kept up to a great extent in Demerara. There are even many calling themselves Brahmins who, while averse from work themselves, obtain the performance of their tasks by working upon the superstition of their fellows.

of things, even if there were no complaints on the subject, exists in the fact that, whenever allowed to do so, they invariably erect for themselves private cottages of mud. These are generally, as may be supposed, of a wretched description, and the preference of them by the immigrants to the comparatively substantial houses provided by the estates, is usually cited by the planters as the deliberate preference of squalor to comfort.

70. From personal inquiries among many immigrants, I am satisfied that this inference is incorrect; their invariable answer has been to the effect that these houses are their own; their privacy is not so continually invaded, and they are more secure from loss of their goods and attempts on the chastity of their wives.

71. This evil would not admit of so immediate a remedy as the others mentioned. But a long step towards its alleviation might be made by compelling all the estates which have surplus front lands (and these are very many) to devote drained spaces for the erection of these cottages by deserving immigrants who have the means and desire to do so; and also by preventing new immigrant barracks being built of more than one story, and without kitchens, &c., for at most every ten people.

72. The permission to erect private houses is already largely granted on some estates to free immigrants as an inducement to them to remain on the estates. But the mode of living is otherwise discouraged by the planters; as the people, being scattered over a larger area, there is a great difficulty of what is called "enforcing discipline," which really means turning out to work.

73. Another frequent cause of complaint is *want of water*, either of proper quality or in sufficient supply. And this in dry seasons, such as occurred last year, becomes a cruel hardship. Though the country is everywhere intersected by canals and trenches, these, in the dry season, become mostly tainted with salt water, while many are poisoned by the "lees" from the rum distilleries. On the estate on which I resided last

year, I have repeatedly seen the people obliged, after their day's work in the field, to go more than a mile for water, which, even when procured, was putrid in smell and disgusting to the taste; and I was informed that this evil existed even in a more exaggerated form on other estates. Efforts were undoubtedly made to procure pure water at a great expense from a distance of twenty miles up the Demerara river, but even this was muddy and unfit for drinking; and, moreover, the distance and difficulty of transport inevitably rendered the supply meagre and irregular.

74. There is no excuse for such a want of water in Demerara. The average fall of rain of one hundred inches (there were even from sixty to seventy inches last year) is amply sufficient to supply all the wants of the estates if the commonest precautions were taken for preserving it.

75. One or two estates are now setting a good example in providing iron tanks, but this could not probably be afforded by all. But, from whatever source derived, a sufficient supply of comparatively pure water should and could easily be enforced from all estates to which immigrants are allotted.

76. Another much-needed reform is that of the Immigration Department. Its present head is a thoroughly upright, conscientious, and indefatigable public officer, and he is, as far as possible in his circumstances, independent. The difficulties of his position have been very much lightened by the present Governor, even before I left the colony; but under the present system his time must necessarily be chiefly taken up by the mere routine of the office, leaving but little time for the proper and searching investigation of the complaints which are continually pouring in upon him from all quarters.

77. His subordinates are insufficient in number for the proper performance of their present duties; and entirely so, if others, such as it is desirable should be performed by the office, were added to them.

78. At present, the sub-immigration agents visit estates at stated periods for the purpose of re-indenturing and paying bounty, or of granting free tickets to immigrants whose term

of service has expired, and only at other times for the investigation of some matter of complaint of more than ordinary gravity. As they almost invariably, when on their travels, accept the hospitality of managers, it is hardly to be expected that their duties should be strictly, regularly, and impartially performed.

79. And, indeed, I have good reason to believe that they are not. For I have myself known cases where immigrants' indentures have been improperly and carelessly extended, and where complaints have been but cursorily and far from thoroughly investigated. Moreover, by the very anomalous system, introduced by the late Governor, of granting them travelling allowance individually, they were made virtually independent of the head of the office and free of proper control.*

80. But even granting that the present work is efficiently performed, there is another duty which, for the sake of justice to the immigrants, should be performed by the office.

81. Under the present law, an employer is bound to pay to his indentured labourers the same price for their work as paid to free labourers. It is, however, notorious that this obligation is as a rule evaded, and sometimes openly broken.

82. The former is easily done, where all field labour, as in Demerara, is done by tasks, by allotting to both indentured and free an equal area for weeding, ploughing, or cane-cutting, at the same price, but selecting the more distant† field or ground, which requires more labour, for the indentured.

83. As regards actual breaking of the law, I have known cases, and believe them to be not uncommon, where immigrants have been compelled to work for a price which free labourers would have, and sometimes actually have, refused.

84. It is quite impossible for the most impartial magistrate, under the present system, to do justice in such cases, or in

* I believe that this anomaly has been removed by the present Governor since my departure from the colony.

† Distance is of great importance where, as on most of the estates, some fields are three to five miles from, while others are in the immediate vicinity of, the buildings.

many others, in which immigrants are aggrieved. The manager can always produce a number of overseers, drivers, and others dependent on him, to make an overwhelming weight of testimony in his favour, while the immigrant, who is perhaps generally in the wrong, has not the intelligence and cannot produce proper witnesses to present his case clearly when he is in the right. He has thus a direct inducement to supplement his ignorance by falsehood and suborned perjury, which, being usually transparent, of course invalidates other very possibly truthful testimony on the same side.

85. On the other hand, my experience has taught me that falsehood in court is by no means confined to the coloured races, and that the whites connected with estates, whether managers, overseers, or engineers, are often by no means scrupulous about the truth when their interest or their fears enter into the question at issue; and this class of falsehood, as proceeding from greater intelligence, is of course the more difficult of detection.

86. As the result of all these difficulties in the path of a most conscientious magistrate, an immigrant but rarely wins a case against his estate, either civil or criminal, either as prosecutor, plaintiff, or defendant. The magistrates' returns would indeed indicate otherwise, from the large number of cases which appear there as dismissed. But of these but a very small portion have been really pressed by the managers. For it is notorious that very many informations are most improperly compromised by money payments, and in these cases but a slight show of resistance, if any, is maintained in court.

87. These evils, and many others like them, can, in my opinion, only be remedied by the appointment of Government officers whose duty it would be to make unexpected visits to estates, and whenever occasion might require, for the purpose of personally inspecting work assigned and the payment offered to immigrants, and of ascertaining the true facts in any doubtful case where these labourers were concerned, so that there might be always forthcoming, when necessary, independent and disinterested evidence as a guide to the magistrate in his decision.

88. The police would not answer for this duty, as in the first place they are, for the most part, entirely ignorant of any of the eastern languages, and, moreover, would be too much under the influence of the managers, many of whom are also justices of the peace, and would thus be furnished with a ready means of bringing pressure to bear upon them.

89. I would respectfully suggest that for this purpose the number of sub-immigration agents should be increased, that they should be instructed to acquire a practical knowledge, as might be sufficiently done in a very short time, of the different kinds of work on the sugar plantations, and should be forbidden to accept under any circumstances the hospitality of managers, which is certain to be largely proffered to them.

90. As tending to prove the propriety of this restriction, I may mention that it is voluntarily placed upon himself by an officer of considerably higher standing than the sub-immigration agents, and I have the less hesitation in mentioning his name in a matter which redounds so much to his credit in that I have no personal acquaintance with him; I mean Dr. Shier, the Inspector of Estates' Hospitals.

91. So strictly scrupulous is he in this respect, that he is frequently obliged for his night's lodging to put up with such very scanty accommodation as is afforded by the court rooms at the police stations; and I cannot but think that such scruples should be encouraged, as could be easily done by furnishing a room with necessary furniture at stations for the use of all public officers on their official circuits.

92. As your Lordship might deem it a matter of difficulty to find proper persons to fill such offices as I have proposed, I would most respectfully venture to suggest that such might be found among discharged non-commissioned officers of the army who had served in India.

93. Their residence there would have to a great extent acclimatised them to all tropical climates, and would possibly have given them a sufficient knowledge of one or other of the Indian languages to enable them to make themselves understood to a few of the immigrants of each estate. Their pensions

would moreover assist their salaries, and if they had been engaged in regimental or brigade offices they would have learnt something of official routine and correspondence.

94. In conclusion, it is not without earnest thought and a profound conviction of the good policy as well as justice of the measure that I venture to suggest a reform of the present artificial system of immigration which is taking place in British Guiana, and this almost as much for the interest of the planters as of the immigrants themselves.

95. For, notwithstanding the superior value of the acclimatised immigrant, I am satisfied that the power of obtaining an unlimited amount of new hands, to so great an extent at the public cost, is an encouragement of an uneconomical use of existing labour, and of carelessness and even cruelty in the treatment of those already under indenture.

96. And I would respectfully urge that on higher grounds the limit has been reached at which immigration should be allowed to continue on its present footing as a direct burthen on the public purse. It was, no doubt, fair enough that the general revenue of the colony should at first pay a third of the cost of immigration. Labour was absolutely required, not only for the advancement of the general prosperity, but to prevent the wholesale abandonment of cultivation. The Negro labourers, moreover, required competition as an incitement to industry, and the lesson which has been taught them has been doubtless wholesome and just, though a very severe one. But I would respectfully urge that its severity is now becoming disproportionate to its justice, and every year more so.

97. Though production has greatly increased, it has not done so in proportion to the labour introduced, and wages have consequently fallen in value all over the colony. In the dry seasons planters have often difficulty in finding employment for their indentured immigrants, and have therefore very little for free labourers, whom I saw last year in large gangs, perambulating the country unable to find work at all. Moreover, the excessively high taxation (raised chiefly from articles of general consumption) which is necessitated by the annual

charge* for the colony share of immigration, makes exceptionally dear nearly all the necessaries of life used by the labourers, both Creole and immigrant.

98. These are thus paying in two ways for what, instead of a benefit, is a direct and is becoming a grievous injury to them. On the other hand, the planters obtain free of duty the greater part of the supplies peculiarly required by the estates, and thus pay but a mere trifle towards the general revenue.

99. I believe that on a close investigation of this subject your Lordship would be convinced that the time has come when the planters should pay the whole cost of immigration, which now far more than formerly exclusively benefits themselves.

100. They are well able to do so, for it is notorious that all the well-managed estates (and no others have a right to be considered) have for some years been making large profits.† These were greatly increased by the destruction of the estates in Louisiana,‡ which alone besides produced the peculiar kind of crystallized (or as it is technically called vacuum pan) sugar, which is so greatly in demand in the United States, and were again largely increased by the enhanced value of all kinds of sugar produced by the troubles in Cuba.§

* £65,000. I have not the exact figures at hand, but I believe that this is an approximate amount. A comparison between the tariff and prices existing in British Guiana, with that of the other West Indian colonies, would show in how high a degree this is true.

† The estate of "Schoon Ord" has for three years just published net profits averaging £15,000 (last year £17,000, if I recollect rightly). It has no superiority over a hundred others beyond freedom from embarrassment, command of capital, and good management; the land is even considered inferior to the average, and not many years ago was nearly being abandoned as worn out and worthless. Ammonia has worked the change. Ruimveld (belonging to Dutch proprietors) has been worked at a profit for many years, and is now believed to be not far behind "Schoon Ord" in its net returns. The latter statement also holds good of many others, in proportion to the amount of their crop.

‡ Except Mauritius, but this supplies mainly the Australian market.

§ To show what the profits must have been this year, I would mention that I was informed by the proprietor of an estate of average size, making

101. If any portion of these profits in any way benefited the labourers there would be less cause for the measure proposed. But so far from that, wages, as I have shown, are falling rather than rising.

102. Even when the whole direct cost of immigration is borne by the planters, the general revenue will still be charged for expenditure indirectly occasioned by it with an amount fully proportionate to any advantage gained from it by others than planters, these being the very small mercantile and shop-keeping community, who are not owners of or directly connected with the sugar estates.

103. I have, as I have said, no statistics to guide me, but I feel sure that your Lordship by reference to them will find that of the £80,000 or thereabouts annually paid for police, hospitals, asylums, gaols, and expenses of justice, at least £25,000 has been the direct result of Coolie immigration. This amount is annually increased, and to it must also be added the expense of the Immigration Office, or £3,000 more. The reduction of the general expenditure by the £65,000 or thereabouts devoted to immigration would permit of the admission, free of duty, of all the articles which are necessaries of life to the labourers (both Creole and immigrants), and thus would be, not only an enormous immediate boon to them, but, in accordance with the ordinary operation of free trade, would eventually benefit the planter himself.

104. Were the production of the country to be lowered, or even its progress checked by the proposed measure, considerations of policy might still be allowed their weight against abstract justice. But I believe this would be in no degree the case. For even if less immigrants were applied for, which in view of the very large margin of profit on sugar cultivation I

crystallized sugar, that he made a "handsome" profit when his crystallized sugar sold at 6 cents per pound, but the average price this year has been $6.75, and has been as high as $7.50. Supposing 40,000 of the 80,000 hogsheads made in the colony to be crystallized, the increased profit on this alone would amount for the year to $540,000, or £108,000. The value of common sugar has also been enhanced, but not in proportion.

consider very unlikely, their additional cost would secure better treatment for those already in the country, which with cheaper living would render already acquired labour more willing and therefore more productive. In the end I believe that the gain would be not less that of the planters than of the labourers.

105. In conclusion I feel bound to answer three plausible arguments usually put forward by the planters in proof of the well-being of the immigrants, viz. :—1st, the large number of them who re-indenture; 2nd, the present small death-rate; and 3rd, the large sums taken away by those who return to their own country.

106. It is true that a large number of Coolies annually re-indenture themselves at the expiration of their service, but this may be partly ascribed to many other causes than their well-being in servitude.

107. The 50 dols. (£10 8*s.* 4*d.*) bounty paid to them for re-indenturing, often increased 5 dols. or 10 dols. by individual proprietors, is alone a very powerful temptation. The present advantage of a year's income paid down may well make blind the ignorant Coolie to the possibilities of the future. A similar advantage would be apt to distort the judgment and overcome the prudence of persons in a far higher rank of life; and this tangible temptation is to my knowledge sometimes increased by false allurements held out by "drivers" of their own race, who have been promised premiums for the procurement of "hands."

108. But, notwithstanding these temptations, it would be found on inquiry that but very few of the stronger and more provident, who have saved any considerable sum of money, can be induced to re-indenture except on estates where the treatment is generally known to be good.*

* To give another almost unneeded proof of the actual profit attending considerate treatment of the labourers, I may mention that an estate called *Vreed-en-Hoop*, obtains all its required supplies of labour among old hands who have been attracted from other estates; and these apply in such large numbers as to enable the selection of the best after probation. They are of course far more valuable on account of their being acclimatised, and being

109. Planters as a rule do not exercise any discrimination in the choice of those to whom they give bounty. Inquiries are but seldom made about character or precedent, and, as though a large number of re-indentures redounded to the credit of the management with proprietors at home, hands are often accepted respecting whom the slightest inquiry would have discovered that they had spent the greater part of their previous service in idleness, desertion, and imprisonment; consequently complaints are frequent of desertion following immediately after receipt of bounty.

110. But there is another, and perhaps the strongest reason of all for the amount of re-indentures, viz., that for those who have no capital freedom is really of little value as against indentures, made more attractive by the bounty and (as I have above described) privacy of living. Land is only to be obtained at a high price (the Government rate practically precludes sales), and the Indian Coolie is not fond enough of agriculture to make any immediate sacrifice, such as uncleared land requires, to engage in it on his own account. Neither stock-raising (his favourite occupation) nor shop-taking can be commenced on nothing; so that free Coolies without capital are almost necessarily obliged to work upon the sugar estates. It is thus that the bounty comes in so peculiarly strong a temptation to all such, the strong, industrious, and practised labourer feeling that he will avoid the severer pressure of servitude, and the weak and idle looking to desertion, or at the worst imprisonment,* to which he has probably been well accustomed before.

111. 2nd. The death-rate has certainly been largely reduced by the sanitary measures forced upon the estates by the In-

practised in the various operations of agriculture and manufacture, than new importations for whom the same price has to be paid.

* It is far from uncommon for immigrants (especially those who in their own country have been accustomed merely to in-door work) to break the law with the especial view of going to gaol. Many have told me that they were unable to earn sufficient food on the estates, and preferred the regular rations of the gaol, though accompanied by shot-drill and confinement.

spector of Hospitals, and if, as I am informed, it was last year little over two per cent., is hardly above the ordinary European average. But the returns give, I believe, a far from correct idea of the actual rate, and for this reason that no account is taken of deserters.

112. Many who have deserted from their estates, chiefly from inability,* but some of course from want of will, to earn proper sustenance, in the hope of gaining a precarious livelihood by begging and stealing, die while still deserters. These deaths are probably, for reasons stated below, many of them not known, and when known, do not enter the estates' returns from the impossibility of identification.

113. It is well known that but a very small number of immigrants have left the country, other than those exported by the Government.

114. Some, chiefly Chinese, have gone to Surinam and Trinidad, but these are known, from the frequent communications between the two countries and from the strict watch kept upon outgoing vessels, to be very few, and their loss has been probably more than compensated by immigration from the French and other islands. But even deducting these, and the 7,500 or thereabout who have returned to their own country, from the total number imported, there still remains an enormous loss to be accounted for. If I recollect rightly, about 79,000

* Several most intelligent Chinese, one of them having emigrated free, being in a position which gave him no inducement to speak untruth on the subject, has told me that three-fourths of the Chinese labourers imported from Canton were artizans and other workmen who had never been accustomed to out-door labour, and had been informed in China that they would be allowed to follow their trades in British Guiana. These are the people who find it impossible to earn sufficient sustenance from labour in the sun, and become deserters and thieves. This remark holds good in a less degree of labourers imported from the other Chinese ports, and even in the same degree of the Indians. I am satisfied from a general concurrence of testimony that a large amount of imposition has at one time or another been practised upon them, and that their condition in British Guiana has been a grievous disappointment to all the Chinese and very many of the others.

Indians and Chinese have been imported, to which, moreover, are to be added the births, which, in the absence of statistics, I put down at 15,000 during the twenty years of immigration, and yet there are not now in the country 45,000 at the highest. The death returns cannot account for this fearful depopulation, and, if not, it becomes certain that from some cause or other they are not accurate.

113. These figures alone, if there were no other proof, would serve to show that the lot of the immigrants in British Guiana has not been an easy one.

116. 3rd. The 6,000 who have returned to India have undoubtedly taken with them a large sum of money, and there is also a very considerable sum remaining in the country belonging to Indian Coolies,* being invested in stock, gold and silver ornaments, and other kinds of property. But one who knows the habits and saving disposition of the Coolies, and at the same time considers the amount which should have been earned by them during the twenty years of immigration, is astonished, not at the large amount saved, but at its comparative littleness.

117. A very low estimate of the amount actually earned by the 65,000 Indian Coolies imported during twenty years and their children would be £3,000,000,† considering that the value of the sugar, rum, and molasses made mainly by them is little under £2,000,000 per annum, and that they are earning at the present moment at least £300,000 per annum, that 39,000 had been already imported in 1861, and that wages have greatly fallen since their first introduction.

118. The Emigration Commissioners' Report states the amount taken away by return Coolies up to 1867 at about

* For reasons which, if your Lordship should desire, I will explain in a future letter, only a small fraction of Chinese leave any property whatever, and the few exceptions are chiefly gaming-house keepers, "divers," and perhaps a dozen small shopkeepers.

† Supposing the amount of Indian Coolies in the country to be now 38,000, and allowing 8,000 for ineffectives, such as prisoners, sick, &c., who are supported by others, this would only afford 6½*d.* per head for food and clothing, whereas the Government, buying at wholesale prices, cannot feed its prisoners at less than 8*d.* per day.

£104,000. Allowing for omissions in that, for money taken away in the last two years, and for the value of property in the houses of Coolies still in the country, I am sure that £300,000 would be a very high estimate for the whole amount of property realised, because it is to be remembered that the richer Coolies return to India when they have the opportunity, and I know that a majority of those left behind possess nothing at all.

119. But from this £300,000 must be deducted at least £50,000 for profit made on savings, much of them being invested in cattle and other profitable securities, so that the actual saving would be only £250,000, or 1*d.* per 1*s.* of the whole amount earned.

120. No one who knows the extremely meagre diet of the Coolies and the penurious habits of the great majority of them, could consider such a saving as any argument for their general prosperity.

121. I believe that a careful inquiry into this subject would show that property has almost entirely been realised by the exceptionally strong, and that the many die prematurely and penniless.

122. Your Lordship, if you should have been kindly induced to read this lengthy communication (which I would most gladly have abridged if I had found it possible to do so with justice to the subject) will, I fear, think that I have produced a picture over-coloured as a whole, and incorrect in delineation and detail.

123. I can only say that I have anxiously endeavoured not to do so, and I firmly believe that if the whole truth could be unveiled my case would be found under rather than over-stated.

124. I am quite prepared to bear the grave responsibility of all I have said, and if, as I fear will one day be necessary, a Commission of Inquiry should be appointed, I shall be ready and willing to produce strong evidence in proof of my facts and in support of my opinions.

125. There is a gentleman said to be on his way to England who formerly governed British Guiana; I mean Sir Philip

Wodehouse. I only know him from his reputation and his legislation. From these, however, especially from the ordinance passed by him which took away all summary jurisdiction from the ordinary justices of the peace, I feel sure that he had already begun to see the germs of evils which have been greatly aggravated since his time.

126. Though for this reason he would of course not be able to support my statements to their full extent, I am confident that if your Lordship should see fit to lay this letter before him he would allow the possibility and even perhaps the probability of their truth.

127. Should Sir Francis Hincks, the late Governor, be of a contrary opinion, and I presume from his administration and legislation, which obtained for him so great a popularity among the planters, that he would be, I can confidently refer to a great number of the clergy of all denominations in support of my statements. The Bishop, with whom I have always been on very intimate terms, and who, though he has not had any opportunities of being behind the scenes, and, having been formerly a plantation proprietor himself, is inclined to look upon planters' failings with a somewhat lenient eye, I know agrees with me to a great extent, and would, at all events, give me credit for sincerity.

128. The present Governor has been so short a time in the colony that it is impossible he can have yet seen all the evils pointed out, or any to their full extent, and his position must always screen from him many of them. But I know that he has already discovered some of them, and was meditating their alleviation or removal.

129. From few others could the whole truth within their knowledge be obtained unless they were put upon oath. For practically there are no educated men in the country who are not directly or indirectly either dependent for their livelihood on, or under the control and influence of, the planters.

130. The Portuguese merchants and shopkeepers, and the Creole peasant proprietors, who form the only independent class, are almost wholly illiterate, the first entirely so.

131. The exclusive powers* of the planters in the Legislature, added to their other influence, make the whole body of public officers, and even the clergy in colonial pay, in awe of them, especially since their success against the late Chief Justice.

132. But two public officers whom I have already mentioned, one well known, the other personally unknown to me, I believe to be sufficiently high-minded to speak out what they know, and their knowledge of the subjects on which I have treated is inferior to none, their respective duties having given them peculiar means of acquiring it. I mean Mr. Crosby, the Immigration Agent-General, and Dr. Shier, the Inspector of Estates' Hospitals.

133. The reforms which I have suggested I believe to be absolutely necessary, not only for the sake of justice, and of the comfort and happiness of the labouring classes, but for the interests of the whole colony, and especially to secure the public peace, which has already been so seriously threatened as to alarm† the planters themselves. They could not be achieved, of course, without strenuous opposition and some difficulty, nor at first without expense. But the expense would be trifling compared with the ultimate gain, and the difficulty and opposition would be readily overcome by a Government which is or might be so absolute as that of British Guiana.

134. Should these reforms, or others better adapted to secure the same ends, proceeding from your Lordship's riper judgment and more extended experience, be accomplished

* I mean representative powers, the Governor being, if he desires, almost absolute, through the interest which he can exercise over immigration.

† This is shown by the meeting in London, mentioned above, and strongly confirmed by a gentleman, Mr. Clementson, previously mentioned, as one of the most successful and humane, and I believe one of the most intelligent planters in the colony. In a visit to me the other day he informed me that he was seriously contemplating the sale of his estate (which, owing to the want of capital, would probably not realise more than five years' profit), owing to his belief in approaching troubles among the Coolies.

through your intervention, not only will an enormous boon be at once conferred upon 140,000 out of the 150,000 people in the colony, but the ultimate gain to the whole community would be such as to cause you to look back upon them in after days as not the least among the successes of your colonial administration.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) G. DES VŒUX,

Administrator of the Government of St. Lucia.

The Right Honourable

The Earl GRANVILLE, K.G.

APPENDIX B.

THE agricultural and other labourers of the colony who are employed in the cultivation of the sugar-cane and the manufacture of sugar belong to four distinct races—the Portuguese, African, East Indian, and Chinese.

The Portuguese formerly worked a great deal on estates, but have taken more to trade now, and very few are to be found working on plantations. Being as a class industrious and frugal, some of them have amassed large fortunes in the colony.

Besides shop-keeping, many of them have taken to wood-cutting, at which they excel.

In the African race we include African immigrants and the Creole Negroes of the West Indies.

There is no class of field labourers in the colony who can earn as much at field labour, in a given time, as the Negro. He generally works for a greater number of hours during the day than the East Indian. When working by the task he gets through his work with great speed, and, if allowed, with great carelessness. When employed at trenching, or other work that he likes, he generally works from eight to ten hours a day, but seldom works more than three or four days in the week. He prefers living in his own house to living on an estate, rent free, as he does not care to turn out regularly to work, and knows that living in a house belonging to the proprietor means continuous labour, to which he has a decided objection.

Continuous labour here generally means four or five days' work in the field, and six in the buildings, when they are at work. This objection of the Negro to reside on the estate has, to a certain extent, made him independent of his employer—a

fact which the legislature has made use of in regulating the wages to be paid to indentured immigrants.

Several years after emancipation, when the prospects of sugar estates were very bad, some proprietors sold their estates, or the front lands of them, to the Negroes, who clubbed together and found the money to purchase them. This was at a time when wages were so high that it would have been ruin to their employers to continue their cultivation. On these estates villages have been built, and here large numbers of Negroes reside, going out to work on the neighbouring estates, under the direction of one of their own body, who is generally called the task gang-driver. This man contracts with the manager or proprietor of the estate to do certain work for him at a given rate. When the work is completed he receives the money in a lump from the employers, and settles with his people himself. On this amount he receives a percentage or commission for his superintendence. Most of the trenching and cane-cutting work is done by the Negro, though some Coolies and Chinese are pretty good hands at it.

On the day when the Negro is not at work on estates, he generally goes to his garden, if he has one, for a few hours. Negro women, when they work on estates, are generally employed weeding, carrying megass or potting sugar. By far the greater number of artisans employed throughout the colony—of the police, of the sailors of coasting craft, of jobber or porters about the wharves, and of the boatmen on the rivers—are Negroes. Some of them have come from neighbouring colonies—the field being open to all who choose to take advantage of it. The Negro at present complains that he is not paid for his work as he used to be shortly after the emancipation, or, as one of the witnesses expressed himself, cannot now earn nine or ten dollars a week—that is to say, he cannot now get a price for his labour which was then and still would be simply ruinous to the employer. In this sense it is true that he has lost the command of the labour market just in time to prevent him from driving capital out of the country. Had the golden age continued, which the old labourers regret, it would not

have been for their advantage. Experience has shown that the Negro is no exception to the rule that the pressure of social order and the stimulus of the competition which capital supplies are necessary elements in the condition of things best suited to develop the human character.

Relieved from this pressure, his tendency is to sink back into a less civilised state. In British Guiana, of all places, which is only kept habitable, like Holland, by means of a system of artificial drainage, such as requires either the organization of large properties, or else a high standard of aptitude for co-operation in the cultivator, the substitution of small freeholds in the hands of Negroes for the directing mind at the head of a great sugar estate has always, as yet, had the result of sending the plantation out of cultivation.

The class of Indian immigrants at present in this colony, as a rule, cannot earn more than half as much in the same time as the Negro; their love of saving and desire to return to their own country, rather than a wish to make themselves comfortable during their temporary absence from the land of their birth, induces them to work. It often happens that men are sent out who have never been accustomed to agricultural labour. The result is, that they become in many cases discontented with their lot, and when sent into the field do hardly anything, or, as the planters say, "hang over their work." The Indian immigrant generally works in the field six or seven hours a day when engaged at task work, and for four days a week, some work five, and when in the building six days. The Indian does not much care to cultivate land; his great object in life seems to be to amass sufficient money to buy a cow. The Coolie, after he has been here for some time, gives up to a great extent the habit of saluting his superiors that he had on arrival and becomes much more independent in his bearing. The difference of bearing between immigrants about to return to India and those who have just arrived in this colony is very marked in this respect. The Indian is very much given to romancing; when he has a complaint to make he is apt to mix so much that is false with what is true, that it requires great

patience to separate the truth from the falsehood. In this way the Indian who has a real grievance to complain of very often spoils his own case, or disgusts the person investigating it. Accustomed to be dependent on others in India, it is not till some time after his arrival in the colony that he learns to take care of himself. As a rule, he will not marry or live with persons of a different race from himself. There are, however, some instances in the colony where a Coolie man or woman has married a Chinese or Negro. On Adelphi Estate, a Chinaman was living with a Madrassee. On Windsor Castle, a Negro woman was living with an East Indian. The Coolie despises the Negro, because he considers him a being not so highly civilised as himself; while the Negro in turn despises the Coolie, because he is so immensely inferior to him in physical strength. There never will be much danger of seditious disturbances among East Indian immigrants on estates as long as large numbers of Negroes continue to be employed with them.

The Chinese labourer possesses greater intelligence than either the Indian or the Negro, and is much quicker at learning to manage machinery than either of them. He is also very careful and neat in his work in the field or buildings; is much more independent than the Coolie, and not so easily led away by discontented persons; rarely making a frivolous complaint, though when he does make one that is false; it is much more difficult to convict him of lying, from the extreme ingenuity with which he gets up his case and instructs his witnesses. Possessing a keen sense of justice where his own rights are concerned, he is very capable of strong resentment at anything that appears to him unjust. They are much more given to using knives and pointed weapons than the Indian, who generally trusts in a riot to breaking his opponent's head with his hackia stick.

The Chinese as a class are inveterate gamblers and opium-smokers. In their barracks they generally have a room set apart as a gambling saloon, where, as well as in their own rooms, they smoke opium.

The Chinaman here does not save as much money as the Indian. This is, perhaps, owing to the fact that he is not content with such meagre diet as the Indian, and has been accustomed to richer and more varied food. Opium-smoking is carried on by some to great excess, and it is not uncommon to see many of them quite emaciated and almost unfit for work from excessive use of this drug. We have occasionally seen Chinese in estates' hospitals who have been there for years from some chronic disease, and whom the employer has not only to feed, but supply with opium, the stoppage of which would cause their death. The wretched appearance of some of the votaries of this habit has more than once misled strangers into conclusions unfair to the planters and the immigration system. It appears, unhappily, that opium-smoking is not altogether confined to the Chinese. A few Indians have picked up this habit from them. The mischief is perhaps beyond the reach of legislation; but such was not the opinion of a Chinaman, one of the cleverest met with in the colony, who allowed, when asked why his fellow-countrymen, who earned so much, had saved so little, "that they spent a good deal on opium; but it was the English ship that brought it here." Chinese are more given to deserting than Indians, and employers are getting chary of giving them bounty, as they often abscond immediately after receiving it. They have not the same objection to living with females of a different race from themselves that the Indians have. This may be owing in some degree to the small proportion of women who have emigrated from China; but the principal reason for it is that the Chinese have not the difficulty of caste to get over that the Indian has, and are more cosmopolitan in their habits. The Chinese, as far as we are aware, have never combined with the Indians in disturbances on estates; but, on the other hand, have occasionally taken the side of the employer in opposing them. They are more given to cultivating land and keeping pigs than breeding cattle. They are now getting into a habit in some places of going about in the manner of task gangs, living on the estates on which they are working for the time being.

Many of them sent here turned out to be persons who ought never to have been recruited. It is worthy of notice that in places where the Chinaman has other careers open to him besides that of working as a field-labourer for wages, he invariably chooses one where he can work for himself. He either rents a piece of ground near town, or starts a provision or retail shop as soon as possible.

This is the case at Singapore, and Penang, to which great numbers of Chinamen emigrate, returning again, when they have made money, with their children, but leaving behind them the Malay mothers. One of the complaints made to us here by Chinese was that there was no other employment open to them but estates' work; and, when it is considered that the Portuguese, from their prior introduction, have a complete monopoly of the retail trade of the colony, that crown lands cannot be purchased in blocks of less than one hundred acres, and that it is very difficult to find private lands for sale, their complaint seems to be well founded.

APPENDIX C.

REVIEW OF IMMIGRATION.*

THE State-aided immigration into British Guiana is a plant of no new growth. It has existed in various progressive stages of organization for a period of thirty years. It began simultaneously with the emancipation of the slaves. The Act of Abolition of Slavery in 1834 contemplated an apprenticeship of six years, during which the slaves might be educated for freedom, and the masters might provide for the contingency of their withdrawal from field labour. The first idea was to gather up and import surplus population from the West Indian colonies, especially liberated Africans from the Bahamas, where captured slavers were condemned. As early as 1836 an "African Emigration Ordinance" was passed, as well as a Colonial Indenture Ordinance to enable private individuals importing labourers at their own expense to retain them under an indenture of servitude, according to contract for a period of years. But although it was long before the fact was recognised, *every importation of African blood, whether Aboriginal or West Indian, has from the first regularly disappointed its promoters.* The causes are no doubt the same as those which have prevented the planters from retaining the continuous service of the Creoles of African descent. They lie partly in the character of the Negro, and partly in the incapacity of the old labour system for adaptation to a state of things in which the labourers had become free.

The employers did not, however, confine themselves to the African blood. In 1838 the first ship-load of Coolies was brought over from Calcutta by private enterprise.

* Report, pp. 37 *et. seq.*

In the very same year the apprenticeship of the slaves was cut short, as regards prædial labourers, two years before the term of its expiration. Taken by surprise at the rapidity of events, unable to resist the current of opinion in England, which had set in irresistibly against every vestige of slavery, and distrusting their power to retain the freedmen in their service, the planters of British Guiana now commenced a series of efforts to replenish the labour market by systematic immigration under the auspices of the Government. In 1838 resolutions in favour of a general scheme of immigration were adopted by the Court of Policy. It was commonly agreed at this time that if conducted on an extensive scale, the business ought not to be abandoned to individual effort, and in the next year (1839) the first Immigration Ordinance was passed, and a proposal entertained for a loan of £400,000, tobe expended upon passage money and premiums. The loan met with opposition from the Governor and a party within the colony, and the ordinance, which was a very imperfect one, was disallowed in England, and never came into operation.

This was the commencement of a struggle between the colony and the Home Government as to the conditions upon which immigration was to be conducted, and the manner in which the scale of it was to be fixed from year to year. With the immigration question was mixed up, to the great hindrance of a speedy settlement, the inveterate colonial controversy about the renewal of the "Civil List." The object of the Home Government at this time was to secure that the amount to be expended on immigration should be regulated by the Governor, before whom the interests, of all classes were on an equal footing, *rather than by the Combined Court, a quasi-representative body, which reflects only the views of the landed proprietors or planters.* It was desired by this means to retain in the hands of the Governor the power of at any time putting a complete stop to immigration, in case any conditions thought necessary to secure the welfare of the immigrant should not be complied with. In particular, the maximum number to be introduced in any one year, and the ports from which immigration was to be allowed,

were reserved as points in the discretion of the Governor. The efforts of the colonists were directed in part against this governmental control of the expenditure, but even more strenuously to obtain immigration without limit as to the places from which the immigrants should come. Africa was still the field from which most was expected, and India began to assume the first place only when it was found that the Home Government was unalterably determined not to allow its efforts to suppress the slave-trade to be neutralized by permitting labourers to be recruited upon African soil.

Besides the disallowed Ordinance of 1839, one passed by Sir Henry McLeod in 1841, as a part of his negotiations when settling the Civil List, was objected to by the Home Government. By the time this ordinance had been amended, and came home a second time for confirmation, the Home Government had by degrees arrived at the conclusion that the immigration (still exclusively African) must be not merely supervised but conducted by the State in vessels specially hired and licensed for the purpose. Accordingly the Ordinance of 1842, though it complied in every respect with requirements hitherto made, was not confirmed. The colony therefore set to work again, and passed an entirely new ordinance providing for the expenses to be incurred by the Home Government in conducting the African immigration, and other matters, of a more definite character than hitherto had been contemplated. This ordinance, when once more amended, was finally confirmed, and became the first final settlement, though a partial one only, of a system of immigration destined actually to be put in practice.

In the meantime, events had occurred in the colony pointing out too plainly the dangers which beset the course now fairly entered upon. A vigorous attempt had been made to procure immigrants without the aid of the State and without the sanction of an ordinance, the expense to be defrayed partly out of a fund raised by subscription, and partly by a fee to be paid for each indentured labourer by his destined employer. A society was formed in 1839 for the purpose, which procured 2,900 labourers

from Barbadoes, and thirty from the United States. The scheme, however, notwithstanding the spirit with which it was started, proved a failure ultimately in more respects than one. The promoters quarrelled among themselves, the money contributed was wasted, and the immigrants became speedily absorbed into the mass of the village population. Very many of them, bad characters to begin with, found their way before long into the colonial gaols.

Again, in 1841, during the temporary operation of the Immigration Ordinance of that date, which, as before noticed, failed of confirmation in England, bounty was paid on 8,098 newly-arrived immigrants. Of these, 4,312 were Portuguese from Madeira, and 598 from Brazil. This Portuguese immigration had set in in a natural manner a few years before; but was now found capable of indefinite extension under the stimulus of premiums by way of bounty to importers. Unhappily, most melancholy results followed, upon what was, in fact, a premature attempt to carry on without system *the most difficult of all economical operations*, the *transfer*, namely, of a labouring population *by wholesale*. The mortality among the Portuguese, a race hardly apt to labour, and reared in a climate more nearly resembling that of Guiana than many others, but turned loose into the fields under the stimulus of task work at high wages, and fed upon unusual food, without proper supervision or medical resources, was appalling to the community that had invited them. It became necessary, in May, 1842, to put a temporary stop to this particular immigration; not before the Governor had found himself obliged to communicate with the Portuguese authorities with a view of checking the influx. In October of the same year the public immigration under the disallowed Act of 1841 came to an end.

The annual arrivals now fell to a few hundreds, and consisted of Portuguese paying their own passage-money, and of liberated Africans imported directly by the British Government. This African importation proved an economic failure. It was computed that thirty-two African boys, who arrived in 1843 in the first vessel chartered by the Government, the *Arabian*, had

cost the colony £52 1*s.* 8*d.* per head, and the numbers introduced in the years 1843, 1844, and 1845, amounting to only 2,128 in all, might well seem insufficient to meet the growing necessities of the plantations. Africa, the natural recruiting-ground of cultivators in the tropical regions of the Atlantic basin, had been closed thirty-two years before emancipation by the abolition of the slave-trade; and now, thirty-two years after, still remains closed, as if by way of purgation for her ancient wrong, and at all events as a necessary precaution against its renewal. 12,000 of the rescued slaves, the legitimate fruit of that costly African squadron which humanity has so long induced Great Britain to maintain, and 380 Kroomen, make up all the contribution as yet supplied by Africa to the labour market of British Guiana.

It had become necessary to look further afield. Three Acts were passed in 1844, by the first of which provision was made for a Chinese immigration then anticipated, which, however, came to nothing; by the second, the provisions already in existence were extended to Asiatic emigration in general; and by the third, a special credit of £75,000 was opened to defray the expense of importing 5,000 labourers from India.

The first-fruits of this legislation were visible the next year on the arrival of 563 immigrants from Calcutta, and 225 from Madras. In the next year the Portuguese immigration recommenced, and at once attained its maximum, nearly 6,000 arriving at once while the quota from India leapt up to 1,373 from Calcutta, and 2,455 from Madras. The natural result followed on this extreme inflation of the system, and once more proved the absolute necessity of circumspection in promoting by artificial means the migration of large masses of people, who became colonists not spontaneously, but under the influence of strong persuasion, and facilities carefully provided. The ranks of both Portuguese and Coolies were ravaged by disease, and literally decimated year by year in the process of acclimatisation. Sir Henry Light stated his belief to the Committee of the House of Commons, that one-fourth of the people from Madeira had died, and an immense number of the Coolies.

The late Mr. M. J. Higgins, then a landed proprietor in the colony, gave an independent testimony to the same effect in a passage of his evidence, the graphic touch in which it is even now painful to read. "A good many of the Portuguese died, and a good many of the Coolies have died; *they wandered about the colony.* I should think a vast number have died, but I have no means of stating the exact number." The number who so perished, in fact, never can be known. We have grounds for believing that it amounted to a mortality of ten per cent. per annum.

With regard to the Madeirans, the numbers introduced up to 1845 were 5,295; between 1845 and 1851, 13,412; making a total of 18,707. The census of 1851 showed that only 7,928 remained at that time in the colony; but a considerable number had returned to their native country, and it is impossible to ascertain exactly how many. No certain calculation can be founded on these figures, which are, notwithstanding, sufficiently suggestive. The subsequent history of these people is remarkable. The most enterprising of them did not stay long on the estates; on many estates not beyond the first monthly expiration of their hiring. They took to hawking cloth and other goods, and supplying the necessities of their countrymen, the Creoles, and the Asiatic immigrants, in the way of retail dealing. Of small shops there was a great deficiency in the country districts; the Portuguese stepped in and supplied it. By degrees the bulk of those who were left on estates followed the example of their compatriots; later immigrants went with them, preferring the counter to the canefield, and the colony found itself endowed, as it were by accident, with a frugal, orderly, and intelligent race of small shopkeepers; a great boon to the labouring classes, and a great advantage to all. The Portuguese shop is a regular feature at every corner of a street in a Guiana village, and upon every estate; and it is said that they have in their hands nine-tenths of the retail-trade of the colony. Certain it is, that not even the Chinese, who in Singapore and many other places are the small traders of the community, have succeeded in ousting this

industrious race from the position of vantage which they have created for themselves. Few of them have made fortunes, though the number of those who have done so is increasing; but the majority of them are rather rising than sinking in the world, and it is evident that public opinion in the colony regards them as useful, if not indispensable members of the community.

To return to the mortality among the early immigrants: it was nothing more than the inevitable result of throwing large masses of uneducated people upon their own resources, separated from all they were used to, in a region where they had not the slightest means of realising by what new conditions, unfavourable to human life, they were surrounded. But there were other special reasons for the failure of the Coolie race to become speedily acclimatised, and to thrive upon the estates. First, the climate of British Guiana is unique; and, while the inhabitants are comparatively exempt from some diseases, they are peculiarly liable to others. The difficulty with which at certain seasons the skin heals from any slight wound is often disagreeably experienced by new comers. The small spines which cluster on the lower part of the leaves of the sugar-canes, the stings of insects, and the bites of chigoes and other vermin, insignificant in themselves, may, with neglect, come to produce ulcers affecting life and limb. Not merely medical advice is necessary in such cases, but medical superintendence, if not discipline; and this was not regularly obtainable on sugar estates in the early days of immigration. Novel food, and sometimes a deficiency of it, continued further to reduce the standard of health; next, the immigrant Coolies were not hardy men, accustomed to agriculture, but townsmen, the poorest naturally, and least well-to-do of the population of the great cities of India; consequently unaccustomed to field labour, and many of them sickly, puny, and incapable. Next, the proportion of the sexes was two to one in favour of the male, and this circumstance was unfavourable to family life, fostered unsettled habits, and tended to lower the standard of morality, and consequently of health. The women, moreover, were for the most

part individuals got together to supply the statutory quota: not the natural partners of the men who volunteered to emigrate. Few married men cared to come, and there is among the Coolie population in India no class of respectable single women. The proportion of females was accordingly made up "in the bazaars," and results were, few children and many diseases. Of misconduct among people so situated it is not worth while to speak; no doubt the standard of reliance and self-control was lower among them than among the average of their fellow-countrymen. The Madras people in particular suffered from these causes to a degree which created a prejudice against them in the colony, as unfitted to stand the climate. The same thing had been said, under like circumstances, of the Portuguese. A greater or less degree of care in the recruiting would, in all probability, have accounted for the difference.

But, besides these causes, the planters complained that in the absence of a special indenture or contract lasting longer than the statutory hiring of one month, they had no hold on immigrants allotted to them, were consequently unable to supervise the tedious process of acclimatisation, and were powerless to lessen the existing mortality. Immigrants, it was said, are naturally sanguine. Their disappointment at finding their situation less advantageous than they had pictured to themselves, led to their leaving their allotted masters so soon as the first monthly hiring expired. As yet inexperienced in the country, unbroken to the labour, and unacclimatised, they took helplessly to a wandering life, and succumbed to the hardships of it without care and without pity. The same causes operated to perhaps a greater extent in Trinidad, whence the Governor, Lord Harris, wrote on 21st February, 1848, that "scarcely a week passes but reports are sent in from different parts of the colony *of the skeletons of Coolies being found in the woods and cane pieces.*" The experience thus gained led to an ordinance, providing medical attendance for immigrants, and confirming the institution of Estates Hospitals by law. Immigrants not bound to labour for at least six months were to work out the cost of medicine and sustenance when well. In 1848 a further

step was taken, and the Home Government consented to allow *the indenture for three years certain* of all immigrants thereafter introduced under this ordinance. But before the Act could come into operation, the *immigration from India was stopped.* No new Indian immigrants were introduced into the colony between the years 1848 and 1851. To explain this we must recur to the pecuniary side of the question.

The vote of £75,000 in 1844 from the colonial revenues, to provide for the expenses of immigration, was intended as a temporary measure, waiting the confirmation of certain Immigration Loan Ordinances, which were passed along with the other Immigration Acts of the year. These, however, were all disallowed by the Home Government; not as objecting to the principle of such a loan, but because of words in the preamble which were held to be an encroachment on the royal prerogative. This matter being rectified, the immigration loan of £500,000 was finally assented to; and Immigration Loan Commissioners were appointed, with power to raise money at 5 per cent., not exceeding £100,000 in any one year, on the security of the general revenue of the colony. A sinking fund was established, and the taxes on agricultural produce, then leviable, were declared permanent, and especially set apart to meet the interest and redemption charges of the debt. The credit of the colony declining with the increasing difficulties of the planters, amending Acts became necessary, to authorise a higher rate of interest and the sale of bonds below par.

Whatever modification time may have produced in the views with which the English commercial legislation of 1836—1846 is regarded in the West Indies, no man can deny that it, at least, brought to a crisis the ruin long pending over many heads, and aggravated the distress which had overtaken the sugar cultivators, ever since the freedmen began to use their freedom to demand higher wages, and to withdraw themselves wholly or in part from field labour. It is unnecessary to the purpose of this sketch to indulge in the vanity of apportioning blame. It is matter of history that the ex-slaveholders, converted against their will into employers, failed to retain the

continuous service of their late slaves; that disasters came far too rapidly for them to adapt themselves to the circumstances of a free labour market; and that the Negroes, after exacting a higher rate of wages in 1842, from the necessities of their employers, than they could really afford to pay, continued during some years to accumulate wealth, by way of wages out of the sugar cultivation, while the capital which supported it was fast draining away. The planters now paid dearly for the persistence they had shown in standing out against the conditions on which immigration might have been obtained; in clinging so long to the vain hope of an African immigration, and in initiating their system of premiums on importation, both with Portuguese and Indians, without sufficient preparation, and on too vast a scale. They were unfortunate, too, in choosing the old battle-field of the Civil List on which to fulminate their protest against the policy of the mother country; and still more so in the traditional device they resorted to, of stopping the supplies by way of coercing the Governor and Colonial Office. The consequent loss to the revenue was enormous; and in the general collapse of all financial and governmental arrangements, the immigration from India ceased entirely for three years.

In return for an expenditure amounting, as we shall show hereafter, to £378,830 5*s*., there was now in the colony a body of 7,000 African immigrants, by this time mostly independent, and not contributing greatly to the supply of field labour; another of 8,600 Indians, by whom at this time the greater part of the sugar crop was made; and another of 8,000 Portuguese, now fast withdrawing from the estates, but in so doing supplying, as retail shopkeepers and hawkers, an element much needed by the community. But all this was inadequate to fill the gap, and the break-up of the old proprietary ensued. A great portion of the sugar estates came into the market during the crisis, and though purchasers were scarce the majority changed owners.

It is a singular fact, well worthy the notice of economists, that this fall of the old proprietary, and the consequent trans-

mutation of colonial agriculture into a business entirely commercial and speculative, by the loss of the traditional sentiment which attached to old family estates, was contemporaneous with the first signs of recuperative energy in the sugar industry. Mr. Kelly dates in 1848 the first pause in its downward career, and in 1851, the two dates just covering the transition period in question, the first symptoms of its revival.

One cause of this revival was the timely and judicious assistance at this time voted by Parliament to the West India interest. Of the sums permitted to be raised under Parliament on guarantee, £250,000 was the share apportioned to British Guiana, and it was decided by the Colonial Government to expend £50,000 of this upon a railway, and the rest in reviving the East Indian immigration.

An interesting record of the colonial history is the Report published at the close of 1849 by a Commission appointed to examine into the state and prospects of the colony, and to decide on the best means of spending the Parliamentary loan. The Commissioners took perhaps an unduly desponding view of troubles in which they had individually borne great part. They certainly ignored the comparatively thriving condition of the great bulk of the peasantry; and by taking count of all the abandonments of estates since the Dutch epoch, as well during slavery times as afterwards, by erecting squatting into a "vicious practice," freehold tenure into a "crying evil," and the "not contributing to raise the staple of the colony" into an offence against patriotism, if not against morals, they succeeded in producing a picture of demoralization and ruin which has happily been belied by subsequent events. But it must be recorded on the side of the planters, that the best interests of the colony were now bound up with the cultivation of sugar; that the prospect of making sugar cultivators out of the black population, whether by *métairie* or any other system, had vanished, and that from this time forward the remedy of immigration, the one chance that remained, was seized on and pursued with rare tenacity and vigour.

Even before the Commissioners of 1850 had presented their

Report, two ordinances were passed by which the loan was appropriated and the interest secured upon certain import duties. The principle of raising import duties upon articles of common consumption, for the sake of defraying among other things the expenses of immigration, had been first conceded by Lord Stanley, with respect to the Tax Ordinance of 1842: "Whatever may be thought," he says, "of the ultimate prospects of the planters, there can be no question that they are *at present* suffering severely from the high price and scarcity of labour, and that *every possible relief ought to be afforded to their cultivation;* and, on the other hand, there can be as little doubt that the great body of the consumers are well able to pay the taxes on imports." It may be assumed that the application of Customs Revenue, derived from articles of common use, to a purpose which directly benefits only one section of the community, and that *the wealthiest and most powerful, and moreover which, in fact, absorbs all the representative element in the Government,* is only to be justified by a full demonstration of greater benefit derived indirectly by the other classes and sections from such expenditure, than could reasonably be expected from giving any more popular direction to money.

The quinquennial increase in the number of Indian immigrants arriving during each of the four periods, 1851—1855, 1856—1860, 1861—1865, and 1866—1870, is represented by the figures 9,000, 14,000, 18,000, and 24,000. The days are gone by when the system was overtaxed by an immigration of a few thousand more than usual to the extent of producing a ten per cent. mortality. There are no signs as yet of its breaking down under the increase, and there are now resources to fall back upon, if the death-rate is found to be increasing. In 1853, besides the Indians, 647 Chinese were added, and in the seven years 1859—1866, about 12,000 more. This Chinese contingent has been found most useful, and great regret is expressed at the termination put to it in February, 1867, by the Chinese Government insisting on a back passage, which it was not found remunerative to concede. The Chinese have proved, in

the hands of those employers who took pains to study their temperament, valuable as field labourers and unmatched as artisans, and the success with which the finer processes of sugar-making by the vacuum-pan method have been conducted in Guiana is in some measure attributable to their neat-handed industry. Ten thousand Barbadians and Creoles of the other islands, 12,000 Portuguese, the bulk of them from Madeira, with a contingent from the Cape de Verde Islands, and 2,500 Africans, have been imported under the stimulus of the premium system; and in the result, the rural labouring population of the colony, which in 1850 was computed by Governor Barkly's Commission at 82,000,* had received from time to time augmentations, which in all considerably exceed that number.†

* NOTE.—Thus, in 1849, there were—

Not residing on estates, and contributing little or nothing to their cultivation	42,755
RESIDING ON ESTATES.	
Creoles	19,939
IMMIGRANTS.	
Africans	5,820
Portuguese	5,206
Indians	8,410
	82,130

NOTE.—Introduced since—

Indians, 1851—1870		65,338
Chinese, 1853—1866		12,628
Barbadians (about)		10,000
Portuguese (about)		12,000
Africans (about)		2,500
		102,466
Subtract returned—		
Indians	7,000	
Barbadians	3,000	
		10,000
		92,466

The actual numbers of the rural labouring population of the colony cannot well be ascertained, until the result of this year's census is known. That of 1861 would seem to imply that it was not less than 100,000.

APPENDIX D.*

DR. COOK, who came out in December as medical officer of the ship *Adamant*, told us of a half-witted fellow among the passengers by that vessel, who was constantly being asked as a joke by his comrades whether he expected to make his fortune, to which he always replied, "No, but I shall get 19 rupees a month." He rated himself at the minimum rate upon his certificate, *but we fear that he will hardly touch more than half the money.*

At the other end of the scale, a very light-coloured, intelligent-looking man among the passengers by the *Medea* attracted our notice, who made the following statement in answer to our questions:—"My name is Mohamed Sheriff. I was a gentleman's servant in Bombay (Colonel Adams of the 13th Native Infantry). I went to Lucknow, where I was buying flowers for the table in the Bazaar, and was there met by a peon, who asked me if I wanted service. I said yes. He asked me if I could boil sugar. I said yes. He then told me there was plenty of work for me if I would take it—boiling sugar and other work if I liked it. That I should have to go to Demerara, and should get 10 annas to 2 rupees a day, and 19 dollars present. So I went with him to Calcutta, and was approved in the office, stayed there five days, and then embarked. Some of the people were allowed to take their 'lotas' with them, but all the others had everything taken away by the peons when they embarked, and were served with Government clothing. I got no extract from the register. Nine men came from Lucknow with me; they were not all cultivators; some barbers, coachmen, porters, and other followings. I have not received 19 dollars,

* Report, pp. 59 *et seq.*

and do not expect it, but I shall get 3 dollars, I bel
have been a sirdar on board the ship. I went with
Regiment to Abyssinia, and to Magdala with the
escorting commissariat stores. I am going to Moor

It is almost a truism to say, but it must be said,
should not be allowed to embark without being inf
the Emigration Agent as accurately as possible what
expect on their arrival in the colony.

The copies from the registers kept by the Protector a
dent magistrates, which are given to the immigrants,
them considered as a contract, may not indeed be held
by the Colonial law, but are none the less direct
of the faith of the community. This is another,
are sorry to say, a still continuing instance of that care
as to the acts of the agents abroad which we have l
sion to notice in the case of the Chinese. Were it n
have a confident expectation that the calling public
to it will cause the immediate stoppage of this abuse,
not look forward with any satisfaction to the conti
immigration from India.

The recruiters receive a certain advance to pay the
of immigrants to Calcutta, and occasional bribes. I
object to get as many together quickly as possible;
cannot be expected that men of this class will be very
there is the more need of care on the part of their em

When a recruiter has collected a sufficient nu
people, he conveys them to Calcutta, where they are l
the emigration depôt on the banks of the Hooghly, an
a daily allowance of food; here they are examined
medical inspector and surgeon of the vessel in which
about to embark. This examination appears to be co
much too hastily, if we may judge from the remarka
dence given last year by the surgeon-superintendent
immigrant ships *Shand* and *Sophia Joachin*.***

The provisions taken on board require the most
inspection, and some have frequently to be rejected.
Crane says, with reference to the case of the *Sophia J*
"I am of opinion that the provisions were of good

except the fish and tamarinds, both being old: as to the fish, I was informed that it was the best that could be got in the market." But Adhar Chander Doss, of the *Shand*, says he found some of the dholl was bad. The lime-juice was also bad, and the salt fish was of very inferior quality.

As to the fresh water taken on board, there is evidence of a most extraordinary character given by Mr. Stephen Whettem, commander of the *St. Kilda*.

"The water put on board the *St. Kilda* was from a tank-boat ordered by the Government. We took on board, I think, about 105 tons. I think the tank-boat is, to the best of my belief, capable of containing 80 tons. I noticed the boat at the time of its coming alongside. I could not tell from the appearance of the tank-boat what quantity of water she might have had on board. I did not observe any difference in the appearance of the tank-boat in her draught after she had discharged the quantity of water we took on board. We were lying on the inside mooring—we were moored fore and aft—we were next the shore—we were so close that the ship could not have swung. I am quite of opinion that the river water was pumped from the river, where the tank-boat lay, into my ship. While the water was being pumped into the ship some one in authority came on board and tasted the water from alongside. He then told the people in the tank-boat to stop pumping, as the water was a little brackish, till ebb-tide set down. I am of opinion that the place where the ship lay was most unfavourable for taking water on board." Dr. Crane also bears witness: "The water put on board was of a muddy appearance, and deposited much sediment. I noticed the appearance when it was being pumped on board, and I inquired of the captain of the tank-boat where the water was obtained. He said from up the river towards Barrackpore. When I observed that this water could never have come from Barrackpore, he laughed. The water when issued was very dirty."

There is evidently something wrong in the Calcutta arrangements; but, in the absence of any statement from the parties who are concerned, we abstain from doing more than recording this evidence.

APPENDIX E.

IT would be well, says the *Pioneer of India*, if t
and the police throughout the country would g
special attention to the operations of a set of scoun
there is reason to believe, are just now particularly a
are formidably organized, and the cause of great
native households, and of much (not entirely un
odium to Government. Some late judicial proceedi
established the fact that the enrolment of Coolies for s
the West Indies, as pursued in Allahabad, differs in no
respect, except one, from the old African slave trade.
exception is that in the present case the victims are
subjects! Here in India, as formerly in Africa, the s
seized by force, and detained against their will, an
their tears and entreaties. Not the least ugly featu
system is that it appears that young, good-looking wo
the class of Coolies preferred in "Jamaica." The "e
agents" go about in uniform and wearing the chappra
appearance the immediate servants of Government. It
fore no wonder, but we are tempted to think it almo
that such villainy as is perpetrated with the apparent
of Government does not excite a rebellion. A sma
would quicken the governmental conscience amazingly

From a subsequent number of the *Pioneer* it appe
four of the Allahabad kidnappers, *alias* Jamaica en
agents, have received a measure of punishment, havi
sentenced to twelve, nine, and six months' impri
respectively for "unlawful confinement." The discove

slave depôt, where some ten or twelve women were kept in durance, came about in this wise :—

A fine-looking young woman went out on the morning of the 14th to earn her usual daily wages by grinding corn for a Bunyah. It appeared, however, that the Bunyah had no corn for grinding that morning, and she was consequently returning home, when a man accosted her, and offered her a job in corn-grinding at six pice for the day. She followed him to the serai at Khurdabad in the city, where another man made his appearance and demanded her name. She began to suspect something was wrong, and tried to escape, but was hustled into a room the serai, where a number of other women and a few children were huddled up together guarded by a third peon. Her entreaties for release were answered by blows and cuffs. She was told not to be a fool—that she would be sent to Jamaica, where she would get twelve rupees a month, besides food, &c. She replied that she had an infant at home, and must want to go away; she was, however, detained, strict watch being maintained over the whole party, day and night. The next day her sister succeeded in tracing her out, and began to cry and beat her breast before the door, until the peon on guard pushed her also inside, saying that she might keep her sister company to Jamaica. Either, however, the arrest of the woman had been too public, or her vociferous howling inside was considered dangerous, for the peon after a time turned her out again.

She offered a rupee to the recruiting agent for her release, but he would not take less than five rupees. In despair she went to the Rev. Mr. Evans, where her nephew was employed, and appealed to him for aid. That gentleman accordingly, in company with the Rev. Mr. Williamson, went to the house indicated, and inquired of one of the agents what it all meant. The scoundrel declared he had orders from Government to collect people for service in Jamaica, but pretended that all the women inside were there with their own consent. The women, however, the women eagerly denied, and rushed pell-mell into the street—one in such a hurry and terror that she left her infant behind, and had to be called back to take it

away. If it had not been for the humane interference of the 'Rev. Mr. Evans, it is probable that a batch of some twenty wretched women would shortly have been produced before a magistrate, where, like Oliver Twist before the guardians, they would have been too bewildered and terrified to express their horror at the idea of being expatriated—and then, why then the subaltern kidnappers would, if we are rightly informed, have received from their European employers seven rupees for each poor woman so recruited, as an encouragement to further such good work. We are curious, by-the-bye, to know why the fee for each woman captured is seven rupees, while that for a man is only four—evidently feminine labour is especially appreciated "in Jamaica" or elsewhere. Though, as we have said, these particular women owe their liberation to Messrs. Evans and Williamson, the arrest of the scoundrelly kidnappers did not take place till some six or seven days later, and was due to the initiative of the police under the sub-inspector of Colonelgunge station.

APPENDIX F.

MORTALITY AND ACCLIMATISATION.

plantations in British Guiana on which there are in-
ntured immigrants, being for the most part on the sea-
banks of rivers, never far distant from the sea, nor
uch above its level, and not extending above two
in latitude, prevent there being any marked difference
r the climate or temperature of the country, and we may
e that, but for local circumstances, the plantations may
nsidered equally healthy.

ospital returns for the last four years show an average
per cent. of deaths to cases treated.

ice and the River Districts are always below the average;
sequebo Islands always above; and the West Coast,
sco Coast, and East Coast, are three times out of the
bove the average also. But as these figures, taken from
nier's reports, are not the percentages of deaths on popu-
, but on the cases treated in hospital, allowances must be
, not only for the difference of climate and situation, but
or the difference of hospital treatment.

these returns could be relied on, we might, in the first
, draw from them the satisfactory conclusion that the last
ears, at all events, have witnessed a great diminution in
eath-rate. In qualification of this we must observe that
eath-rate for all the years subsequent to 1865 has been
ated for free immigrants as well as indentured.

is of itself somewhat reduces the rate, which is highest
g new-comers, who are all indentured; nevertheless, we

have reason to believe that a great diminution has ta
and that it may be ascribed to the better hospit
dwellings, and greater care of late bestowed upon
grants.

The average, if we may judge from this tabl
appear to be, as nearly as possible, 4 per cent. on
lation.

This rate of mortality is undoubtedly large; it is a t
on the whole, but larger in three years out of the five, i
shown by Dr. Dalton ("British Guiana," vol. ii. p. 129
ratio for black troops here for twenty years (4·06 per 10
larger than is shown in Mr. Hadfield's tables, quoted
Dalton, as the mortality of Georgetown for nine years
with 1846, 3·54 per cent. But the mortality returns
Immigration Office are not, at least till within the las
years, to be depended upon as calculations, involving
do a large element of mere estimate.

In the table of returns furnished to us as showing the
of deaths from the commencement of immigration up to
of December, 1866, since the total number of deaths an
is obviously too small, an arbitrary addition of 25 per
made, and a number is further guessed at, to account
immigrants dying in villages, towns, woodcutting place
equal to 10 per cent. upon the whole.

The following return for the last three years is obt
by taking the number on the estates on the last day of the
ceding year, adding the average of new arrivals at diff
times during the year, so as to allow for that part of the
during which they were in the colony, and one-third of
births which have occurred during the year, then dedu
from the total of these numbers the average of those who
returned to India during the year according to the date
left British Guiana; then the remainder shows, as nearly as
be ascertained, the average number on estates at any
during the year. The number of deaths given in the retu
then reduced by one-half of those who have died in the p
institutions, to allow for those who were sent to the hos

oard ship, and for those not under indenture, taken
police and sent to the public hospital. The table
us :—

INDIANS.

	Population.	Deaths.	Death-rate.
1867	31,274	1,333	4·3
1868	33,579	985	2·9
1869	36,860	1,106	3·0

CHINESE.

	Population.	Deaths.	Death-rate.
1867	7,305	367	5·0
1868	6,900	226	3·3
1869	6,553	201	3·0

the percentage for these three years to be :—

1867	4·41
1868	2·99
1869	3·00

appears to be a somewhat nearer approximation to the
calculated from the same data as the Immigration Office
s. We must notice, however, in these data, one point
has tended constantly to diminish the rate. Among the
lation are included a number of deserters, some of whom
been absent for several years. The number of deaths
ng these cannot be ascertained, and probably most of them
omitted in the returns. The census of this year will, we
e, afford means of determining more accurately the mor-
y among the immigrants since that of 1861 was taken.

f the rate has really fallen to three or four per cent. it is
ainly not a result with which to rest content, but it affords
h ground for satisfaction, when compared with the early
ory of immigration. The mortality attending the East
an immigrants from 1845 to 1851 *may be proved to have been
less than ten per cent. annually.* The numbers introduced up
850, beginning with the 400 who came in 1838 (of whom,
vever, 238 returned to India in 1843)

Were in	1845	
"	1846	4,0
"	1847	3,4
"	1848	3,5
Total		11,8

After this, there was no further importation till 1851. people were entitled to back passage after five years' s and in 1850 one ship had returned carrying 247 people

	11,860
	247
	11,613
Adding for the survivors in 1845 of those who came in 1838, many of whom had died:	50
	11,663
The Census of 1851 gave, as the number of East Indians in the Colony:	7,682

leaving to be accounted for, as the excess of deaths births in this period of six years, 3,981, or more than third of the whole. An estimate of the rate of mort necessary to produce this result is not difficult to form. certain that the addition to the population by births, in country, of infants, still surviving in 1851, was insignificant the extreme.

The women were insufficient in number, and in charac ill-fitted to rear families; and among the most thriving part the population, those, namely, who afterwards returned India, the number of infants carried back (that is, of childr under two years of age) remained for many years exceedin small. Omitting, therefore, all considerations of such ad tions to the population, a calculated mortality of 10 per ce per annum, worked out by introducing year by year the n comers, and subtracting 10 per cent. of the whole for deat will be found to leave in 1851, 7,698 survivors, or a trifle mo

actually found in the colony when the Census
1851, was taken.

e of things, we may hope, has passed away,
n. Still, from time to time an estate produces so
in the mortality tables for several years in suc-
show that the very great precautions now taken
ans too great.

often become a matter for serious consideration
tments to such an estate ought to continue, and
d to urge that it is not the culpability, and still
rest, of the employer that ought to be considered
inistration.

ndentured immigrants had been successfully brought
ch of the hospital system, the same cannot be said
indentured. The estate's hospital is an absolutely
the immigration system, but it is more
d immigrants in their first term of

forces itself upon
eigners. Is the
ey require seasoning? Is the
ality equally distributed over all immigrants; or do
se newly arrived in the country furnish more than their
per quota? On this last subject we have referred to
. Shier's reports for information. The figures can be as-
rtained no further back than the first half of 1863, when
e proportion of those who died, not having completed their
st year, was found to amount to 55·56 per cent. of the
hole number of deaths of indentured immigrants. In the
st half year of the next year, the percentage had fallen to
4·67. From the 1st July, 1865, to 30th June, 1866, it rose
gain to 37·65; for the year 1867 the rate was 32·97. In the
st half of that year, yellow fever prevailed; and out of the
ghteen cases which terminated fatally, fourteen were of per-
ons who had not been six months in the country.

In 1868 the percentage was 18·95; and Dr. Shier,
riting on the 10th May, 1869, remarks, that "at present we

are on the verge of the most sickly season, and
of the immigrants are not yet arrived." As was t
the percentage rose in the next year to 20·91; b
who died to make this average, thirty-nine were ch
ten years of age. In the first half of 1870, 158, c
cent., had not completed their first year of reside
them forty-three were children.

This great mortality, of course, attracted Dr. Sh
vation and engaged his attention, and, in his 20
he suggests that the immigrants must have been in
condition on arrival; and proposes measures for
the conditions favourable to the prevalence of those
which proved fatal to them. In his 21st Report, ta
vantage of the experience he had gained, that the acc
tion of immigrants is not effected with equal eas
districts and at all seasons, he proposes
allotments that, towards the end of
should fall only to those
facilities for acclimatisa
and published st
Shier.

We conclude that it is intended so to arrange the a
that schedule A, including the unhealthy estates of *Haarl*
Peter's Hall, *Providence Farm*, *Diamond*, *Friends*, and *M*
Retraite, to which he took exception in his 20th Repor
should be supplied earliest, or at all events not latest, in th
season.

If possible, no relaxation of the rule should be per
mitted by which the agent in India is instructed to take care
as suggested by Dr. Shier, that immigrants should so leav
India that they may come into the colony not later than April
It is true that Mr. Russell, of *Leonora*, gives an instance of a
batch of Coolies, the best he ever had, who arrived in the
middle of May, went to work the second day after their
arrival, and at the end of five years all, except a girl who had
died of consumption, answered to their name. This, how
ever, is to be received as an exception, and of an exceptionally

set of Coolies, not as controverting the assertion that se Coolies have a better chance who arrive early in the son than those who arrive just before the long wet season in, or, that it is better for them not to be put to so severe our directly on their arrival.

The early arrival of new immigrants is the first measure Shier suggests in his 20th Report, 4th April, 1870, as ding to modify the risks to which newly-arrived immigrants subject.

The second is, that they should be supplied with suitable d until they can be trusted to supply themselves.

The principle has already been admitted in section 10 of dinance 9 of 1868, that, with the approval of the Governor, wly-arrived immigrants may be dieted by their employer for r months; this subject having, of course, engaged the ention of the Immigration Department and the Government fore that ordinance was passed.

On the 2nd January, 1867, Mr. Crosby, the Immiation Agent-General, sent a circular to the managers of ates suggesting that all immigrants, until acclimatised, ould be only moderately and judiciously worked, and for x months and upwards regularly fed by the estate, in a manner milar to that which they had been accustomed to during the oyage, the value of such food being a set-off against the ages they earned. The adoption of this suggestion, which ertainly was not in accordance with section 103 of Ordinance of 1864, by Mr. Field, of pln. *Great Diamond*, produced a omplaint from his immigrants, and a condemnation of the plan by the Lieutenant-Governor on the ground of illegality. It worked well, however, and was shortly afterwards legalized.

By the Ordinance 9 of 1868, section 10, it was provided that an employer might supply indentured immigrants with rations during the first four months of their service, according to a scale of dietary to be approved by the Governor, and that he might deduct the cost of the rations, at a fixed price, from the wages the immigrants earned. Mr. Crosby was, at this time, absent from the office, and, with the exception

of the drawing up of a scale by the acting agent-general, a some correspondence with planters, nothing appears to ha been done in pursuance of this section, until on the 12th De 1870, the following notice was issued :—

"GOVERNMENT NOTICE.

"The following is the scale of dietary and the prices fix for the same, which have been approved by his Excellen the Governor, under section 10 of Ordinance No. 9 of 186 as allowable to employers of immigrants for rations which ma be supplied such immigrants during the first four months their service under indenture.

"Guiana Public Buildings,
"Georgetown, Demerara, 12th December, 1870.

"By Command,
"J. M. GRANT,
"Government Secretary.

Proposed Scale of Diet under Ordinance 9 of 1868, S. 10.

Chaotahaziri. At 6.30 A.M.		For 25 Adults.		Estimated Extrem	
				lbs.	Cost.
	Biscuit	¼ oz. each		6¼	50 cts.
	Sugar	1 „ „		1⅝	14 „
					64 cts.
Breakfast at 11 A.M.	Rice	12 oz. each		18¾	50 cts.
	*Dholl	4 „ „		6¼	30 „
	Ghee or Mustard Oil	½ „ „		¾	25 „
	*Salt Fish	2 „ „		3⅛	25 „
	Onions	1 „ „		1¾	14 „
Curry Powder.	Chillies	½ „ „		¾	8 „
	Turmeric	¼ „ „	(say)	¼	4 „
	Coriander Seed			⅛	2 „
	Salt			0	4 „
					$1 68

* NOTE.—If no Dholl, then 4 oz. of Salt Fish.

Dinner at 4 or 5 P.M.	As above, only substituting—	
	24 oz. cooked Plantains (without husks).	
	2 ,, Pork or 1 oz. Butter.	
	4 ,, Salt Fish.	
	1 ,, Onions	$ 1 68
	5 or 6 Biscuits.	
	25 at 16 cts. each	$ 4 0

NOTE.—A little Tobacco should be issued at regular periods to those who use it.

Provisions to be invariably issued cooked.

We think that this scale of diet might be somewhat simplified with advantage both to the labourer and employer, say:

1½ lb.	of Rice.
4 ozs.	Dholl.
1 ,,	Ghee.
¾ ,,	Chillies. Turmeric. Coriander Seed.
2 ,,	Sugar.

and salt, as much as required for seasoning the rice or dholl. This would be quite sufficient to keep a man in health; and, at the same time, would enable him to receive more of his wages in money, as the rations would cost less. As the provision in the Act at present leaves it to the option of the employer whether he will feed his immigrants or not, and this change would no doubt make it acceptable to him, he would be more likely to assist in carrying out the system.

The duration as to the length of time for which the dieting should be continued is a point on which there are great differences of opinion. Those managers who have not tried it are anxious to make it short, fearing the trouble it might cause them; while those who have, are willing to see it extended, having found it beneficial by experience. We understand that the home authorities are no longer inclined to press their objections to the plan founded on the abuses peculiar to a truck system; and, certainly, in this instance, there are circumstances to modify the general rule. After giving considerable thought to the subject, we have come to the conclusion

that the four months' term should be increased; and the sche we would propose is as follows:—

All immigrants, at whatever period of the year arrivi should be dieted up to the end of their first sickly season, s the 1st of October. Since none arrive later than June, th would give a minimum of nearly four months; during th period, they should be mustered at the hospital periodically, least once in every month, and inspected by the medical pra titioner to the estate. On or about the 1st of October, at th periodical inspection, the employer should produce his pa list, and the doctor should strike off from his muster roll eve immigrant who has, every week during the last six week earned enough to pay for his food. The same proce should be repeated at subsequent inspections: until at th end of the second sickly season, when all who are then l (with the exception of those who, as at present, unfortunate become chronic pensioners on the estate), should be remitte to the normal condition of labourers earning their living an receiving all their wages in money.

PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO., CITY ROAD, LONDON.

00056868

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018